

Narrator: Salvatore Novello

Interviewer: Molly Graham

Location: Gloucester, Massachusetts

Project Name: Strengthening Community Resilience in America's Oldest Seaport

Project Description: In partnership with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, these oral history recordings capture the invaluable life experiences of long-lived members of Gloucester's working waterfront, one of the oldest fishing communities in the United States.

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Transcript Team: Molly Graham

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Abstract: This oral history interview with Salvatore Novello, conducted on August 2, 2019, offers an in-depth look into the life and career of a seasoned fisherman from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Novello recounts his early experiences fishing with his father, the evolution of his career, and the significant changes in the fishing industry over the decades. The interview highlights his deep knowledge of bottom fishing and shrimping, and the technological advancements that have transformed fishing practices. Novello also discusses the impact of environmental changes, such as global warming, on fish populations and migration patterns. Additionally, he addresses the regulatory challenges faced by fishermen, including the frustrations with NOAA and the New England Fishery Management Council. Novello's narrative provides valuable insights into the cultural and familial traditions of fishing in Gloucester, the community's adaptation to economic and ecological pressures, and his personal commitment to preserving the fishing heritage for future generations.

MG: This begins an oral history interview with Sam Novello. The interview is taking place on August 2nd, 2019, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The interviewer is Molly Graham. We'll start at the very beginning if you could tell me where and when you were born.

SN: I was born in Gloucester during a snow storm, February 15th, 1943.

MG: You were told about the snowstorm?

SN: Yes. My mother told me about it.

MG: What did she say?

SN: You were born on a snowstorm, and that was that. I'm from a big family. My mother had, I don't know – there was six in the family. My father, there was six. They're all boys. My whole family consists of fishermen. My family came here from Sicily in 1911, and they started fishing. Both sides of my family, they came, and they were fishermen. Everyone in my family, everyone I knew, was fishing. When I was in the first grade, there was a class of twenty-two kids. I never used to ask the kids, "Hey, what's your dad do?" [It was:] "What boat was he on?" That was it. Gloucester was all fishing. I grew up down Fort Square. I don't know if you know [where] that is. That's down the fort where the new hotel is and all that. My grandparents, that's where we lived. If you go way in the top, there's a place way on top, that's where we were brought up. We overlooked it. When I was a kid, I used to say, "This is going to be the most expensive property in Gloucester," and it will be eventually. I think my parents when they sold it, they sold it for 600,000. The last person, they bought it, they paid three million for it. It's at the top of Gloucester. If you look down [to] the fort, it's where all the wharves are, where all the immigrant families first came, down to [the] fort, and then you work your way up.

MG: So it's changed quite a bit.

SN: It's changed. It really has changed. But that will be the top property. In fact, my grandmother's house – I used to call – we had a big grandmother and a small grandmother; one was big, one was [small]. They just sold their house. They had five, six rooms in it, and they had seven kids. I used to say, "Where the heck did all these people stay?" It was a split house. I couldn't believe it. They had one downstairs, a kitchen – I don't know what they did. They had six brothers and three sisters, and everybody was in the fishing business, everybody I knew. So I was in the fishing business, too. All my cousins were fishermen. I was a fisherman. Everyone was fish cutters. Everything revolved around fishing, the whole thing.

MG: Can you trace the fishing history for me? Who was the first fisherman in your family?

SN: Well, let me see ... If you Google me, there's a picture of my grandfather. I have it. Let me see. Just to show you. In 19-something, he put a new engine on his boat, and they had an old picture. Let me see. I go as "Rocky" Novello, too. Did you know that?

MG: I did see that.

SN: I didn't go there [Facebook?] purposely; [it was] because of my grandkids wanted me to be on it. I go, "No, I don't want to be ..." We had a dog, so we put Rocky in there. Let me get pictures. I'm not very good with a computer. Where would I go? Timeline? I don't know where it would be.

MG: What are you trying to do?

SN: I'm not good at a computer.

MG: Would you like me to give you a hand?

SN: Yes, you might know more about computers than I do. Because I [saw] it the other day. His picture is there – Novello, my grandfather. Where would I be? Images?

MG: I'm not on Facebook.

SN: You're not on Facebook? Okay. There's a picture of him probably back in 1910, and he's putting a new atlas on his boat. They were pushing engines then.

MG: I actually might sit over here anyway because the microphone can pick me up better.

SN: I don't know if I'm going to find it, but that's what that was. It was a picture of him.

MG: You can always show me later.

SN: If I can find it. Okay. Basically, that's how we were. Everyone fished. My grandfather was the first, and they were fishing and all the sons. I guess, in an Italian family, it was great to have boys. They say, "You got boys; that's great." Nobody wanted girls. That's the way it was. My grandmother on the Novello side, there [were] six brothers. They're all boys and they all were captains, all owned boats and everything. I went down to my family – I'll be the last one. In fact, my boat is for sale now. It was supposed to be sold last week, but the guy – when it comes to boats, I don't know if you know that, people [are] really screwed up when it comes to – whatever people tell you, you don't believe; you got to see it happen.

MG: Your grandfather was the first fisherman in the family?

SN: My grandfather. They did it in Italy. When they came here, my mother's father, he went to Detroit. They would get a job at the railway. But it was funny, my mother always mentioned they gave him – now this was back in 19-something – a bag of powder, and she never knew – it was probably cocaine or something like that back then. The guy said, "You should bring this to Detroit for me." So they brought the package, but they never knew what was in it. That was way back in 1910.

MG: Your grandfather maybe smuggled drugs for someone.

SN: Well, my grandmother was a bootlegger, too for personal use, not knowing – when things got slow, they bootlegged like a lot of people did; they bootlegged liquor. So what happened was my grandfather Parisi, he says, “Oh, I was a fisherman.” They said, “How come you didn’t go to Boston where the fishermen are?” “Well,” he said, “maybe I’ll go try that.” So he went to Boston, he went fishing, and he liked it. So one time, during a big storm, they came to Gloucester, and he loved it. That’s where they moved to Gloucester. They lived in this two by four house. It’s still down the fort. I mean, you won’t believe it. That’s the way they started. The other side, they were up the hill. The Novello side was the same thing. They did the same thing. It’s crazy. It was all about fishing. Like my mother used to say, “With a boat, you could buy a house. But with a house, you can’t buy [a boat].” That’s completely changed now. Boats ain’t worth nothing. The permits are worth nothing. So we all grew up. We all lived in that neighborhood – my cousins, me, the six brothers. In fact, what was funny about it, everyone’s name was different. You always name your kids after your grandparents. My grandfather was Sam, so I was Sam (DeLena?) Novello. My mother was named Lena [inaudible]. My other cousin was Sam Novello (DeRosalie?). His mother was named (Rosalie?). Joseph and [inaudible] – there’s about eight different things, all had different names, but we put “De” in it to [make a distinction]. We all lived from here around the whole thing. That was it in the family. It was cool.

MG: Did your grandfather talk about what fishing was like in Italy?

SN: No. One of my grandfathers never really talked much. Maybe I take after him. They really didn’t talk much. One of my grandmothers, she never talked much. My Grandmother Novello, she was a spitfire. She’s the one that used to be bootlegging. She was a terror. If we did anything bad, in the family, we had to face her. She was the boss. She was the maître d’ of the Novellos. She was the top dog, and she ruled with an iron fist. Really. She was a lady. She was probably four-foot-nine, short lady, but she was tough as nails. She was really cool. Growing up, basically, all my brothers and sisters all went fishing. My father tried to discourage us from being fishermen because it was hard work. My younger brother used to – “Dad, you only make like sixty cents an hour.” He goes, “Yeah, you’re right. You’re right.” All my brothers, they’re all college graduates, really successful in what they’re doing. I was the only one sticking fishing out. I graduated from high school, [and my father] says, “What are you going to do?” “Well,” I said, “I don’t know what I’m going to do.” He said, “Well, if you don’t know what you’re going to do, no son of mine’s going to be a bum. You’re going to come fishing until you decide what you do.” So I fished. Got out of high school, and I fished with him. It’s tough fishing with your dad. My father, he was a tough guy. Everything in the boat I got blamed for, even if I didn’t do it. He tried to discourage us so bad. We all went fishing. Since I didn’t know what [I wanted to do], they all went to college, my other brothers, and I’m the only one that lasted it out because I didn’t know what I wanted to be. So after twenty, thirty years, I still don’t know what I wanted to be, and I still was fishing. My dad was a different kind of fishermen. He was top-notch. He knew about everything. He knew nets, twine, boats, engine, science, and all that. Smart guy. He had his original captain’s license. He was the captain of the Port of Gloucester. He was a sharp guy. He was very quiet. Maybe that’s why I’m a little quiet; I take after him. My mother was completely different. My mother talked a lot. She’s outgoing. In fact, my mother started the [Gloucester] Fishermen Wives [Association] in the United States. She was the first one.

MG: Lena Novello.

SN: Yes. That's my mother. She's a talker. She could talk. She'd go to the Congress meetings and all that because the fishermen couldn't talk because they were fishing. She was good, really. A little of [her] is coming out with [me] now.

MG: Where was your mother's family from? Italy as well?

SN: Yes, they were from (Terracina?), Italy. That's where they're both from. They come to America. What happened was they never spoke Italian. My father and mother got [inaudible]. "Oh, no. In America, we have to be ..." During the time fishing, all these people mostly spoke Italian. I would say, "Gee, I wish they would have spoken Italian," because the people would talk about you. My father had a nickname; they used to call him "Chinaman." You know why they called them "Chinaman?" Because he never says much and did his work. They called me "Chinaman," too, which I never knew. My son now who's fishing, who's getting out of it, they call him "Chinaman," too, because we never talked much on the phone; just did our jobs to go fishing.

MG: Tell me why your family emigrated to the United States, and how they settled in Gloucester.

SN: Well, they were fishermen. That's the reason. They wanted to fish. They fished in Italy, so they came over here, and they fished. There's a lot of people that – I guess down the Fort, there was Irish; all different nationalities moved in. I think the Italians and the Portuguese were the last, really, to get into it, and they became fishermen.

MG: Tell me about how the fishing tradition was passed down from your grandfather to your father, and now to you.

SN: Everyone went fishing. We all fished, the whole bunch of us. After my father says, "I don't want my sons to be fishermen. Be somebody. Get educated. Learn something else. You can always go fishing at the end." That's what happened. In fact, all my sons went fishing for me for a while, and they all went to college. All my boys all graduated from college, which is good for them. See, you can always go fishing.

MG: Tell me about the kind of fishing your father did.

SN: Well, we did bottom fishing. We'd catch haddock, codfish. Towed nets. We were a trawler; we tow nets on the bottom. We covered big areas. It used to amaze me – my father never really used to fish around here; he used to go fish out of Maine. If you ever look, there are people that know him. He used to make a lot of nets up there – the Novello net, they used to call it. I used to wonder. I said, "How come you never fished around here?" Because he really didn't know the bottoms because up there, there was a lot of clear stuff. I don't know fishermen are weird where they won't tell you something. They learned the hard way and they want you to learn the hard way. I knew this guy when I was fishing – because I used to fish farther out than the inshore boats. You know there's a wreck – I knew there's a wreck there, so I talked to this

guy, his name was Sam, too. I say, "Hey, Sam. I know there's a wreck here." "Yeah, yeah. There's a wreck here. You got to watch out." I said, "Can you give me the numbers?" He goes, "No, I won't give you the numbers, but I'll watch you. If you get close, I'll call you." Guess what? I got the wreck. Lost my net and everything. He says, "I learned that way, the hard way." I would never do that to anybody. I'm soft-hearted. If a guy's just learning, save him the net. But no, some people, they'd rather see you fail than learn something. They used to hate when I used to come inshore to fish. "Oh, boy. This guy's coming here." They used to hate to see my boat because I'm a different kind of fishermen. I study the fish; I really, really do – what they're going to do, how they act, and everything. People say, "Yeah, I fish right there. You're wasting your time there." I'd go there, and I'd always catch fish. I don't know. I had a better act for it than most people. At times, there was this guy, he was way older than me. He was probably ten years younger. He told me. "Can I follow you around fishing?" I go, "Yeah. You're going to do what I do." He says, "Okay, I will." So we went fishing. We had a real good day. Usually, I don't fish the same place all the time. I'd fish one day. I'd go someplace else, fish. I used to have a routine. Just go right around different spots. There was always fish there. I could always find fish. I used to call them my fish because no one used to go there. So he called me. I was steaming away. Do you know what steaming away means?

MG: Tell me.

SN: We're driving away. Going someplace else, to my other spot. He calls me. He goes, "Sam, where you going?" I said, "I'm leaving." He said, "We had a good set." I said, "I did too." He says, "My crew won't let me leave fish like this." I said, "See you later," and I left. See, a lot of fishermen, what they did, which I can't stand, is they pound on fish until there's none left. So the fish were gone, which, in my eyes, was wrong. I was taught to respect fish. That's money in your bank. You go back there, you just take a little out, a little out, a little out. That's how I basically fished my whole life. I was a lone wolf; I rarely ever fished with boats. That's why they said, "The Chinaman never talks. You just see him once in a while." [inaudible] When I first started fishing, I hated killing fish for nothing. I still hate that today. That's a big part of my life. We were out, and this guy says – he was an old captain. This guy was a highliner captain for years and years. He bought a fish wharf [inaudible]. "I noticed," he says, "you're always the first boat out and the last boat in, and you always have less fish. Why is this?" I said, "I know the reason." He goes, "Why?" I said, "I use six-inch nets. These guys use four-inch nets." He says, "Why are you using a six-inch net?" What do you think my answer was?

MG: So the smaller fish –

SN: That's right. To let all the little fish go. He says, "You always have less." I said, "I'm saving fish. I feel like I'm doing something." He goes to me, "What are you stupid, or what? You? One boat is going to save all that fish?" I said, "I saved my share." "No," he says, "you're doing wrong. Put the same net [out] as these other guys do, and fish like them. Be fair to your crew." He was right. I did. I joined them. I was using the six-inch [net] five, six years before it became mandatory to use six-inch, but I was always by myself and it didn't really faze me. But he said, "You stupid or something?" So I joined them. Even today, I look at things and I say, "Wow. These people are killing a lot of fish." My big thing today is bycatch. I can't

stand it. I tell NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Fisheries and the New England [Fishery] Management Council – I call them useless. They always ask me – I say, “I’d work there for nothing.” But then, I figure, “I got to keep my mouth shut because I’m working for you.” To me, they’re nice people, they’re educated people, but they don’t know crap about the ocean. To me, the smartest people are the coastal fishermen of our oceans. They know everything. I fish the Gulf of Maine – I don’t think anyone knows it better than me. I could get my boat, go up, drive and – it’s crazy. But nobody listens, and it really, really bothers me.

MG: That attitude of not wanting to kill fish unnecessarily, did that come from your father?

SN: My father. My father was the same way. Try to save them. That’s your bank account, the fish are. But a lot of fishermen, they don’t see it that way. They just go there, they get a bunch of fish, and they keep pounding and pounding, and the fish are gone.

MG: It seems like an unusual attitude for your father to have, especially in the era he was fishing.

SN: Yeah, yeah. He was a highliner. He was a smart fisherman. He was one of the smartest guys coming out of Gloucester. He knew everything, really. Some guys were good with men. Some guys were good with nets, engines. He was, to me, a complete fisherman. He’d make nets. He’d see a net, go make a midwater trawl. We did a lot of research. My dad was in research. I used to love to do stuff, do research. Go fish, try this, try to save fish, try to catch less, do that.

MG: Tell me more about your family. Were you close with your grandparents in Gloucester?

SN: Yeah. We all lived in – they had the house, big house. I think it was a five-family house. We used to always have meals together. We were pretty neat, close family. Both sides. My mother’s side and all her brothers, they’re all captains. There are twelve boats – fifteen, sixteen, tons of boats in my family there was.

MG: How did your parents meet?

SN: I don’t know. They used to live near each other. One lived up the street, one lived down the street. I really don’t know how they met, but they lived in the neighborhood. Have you ever been down to the Fort?

MG: No.

SN: Maybe I’ll take you down there for a ride.

MG: Yes, that sounds fun.

SN: Yeah, you could see where we lived and they lived. Everybody was fish-related. That’s another thing that really bugs the heck out of me. Gloucester’s got about ten, fifteen fishing

boats left. There's nobody. I do Rhodes scholar work, which I really, really enjoy, because people in the middle of the country know nothing about fish; they really don't. I try to tell them, "Oh, you eat Tilapia from China? They have a chicken coop above it. That's how they feed them. Farm-raised fish, slave labor fishermen." Everyone should buy American. I feel that this is what should happen: we need tariffs because you can buy Iceland fish cheaper than you can buy American codfish, which is crazy. Iceland, they support their fishermen; they give them money for it. We have to compete with them and they're pushing into this country. That has to be fixed for a fisherman to last. There's no more fisherman left. I have to go fishing. I'm seventy-six. I'm still fishing. I have to go fishing because they can't get crew. You can't find people with crew. In fact, this last year, there's a homeless shelter down here. I called the lady up. I said, "Look, I'm looking for a man, a guy. You people know who the good people are," because there's a lot of drug people. She said, "You know, we had a guy come in today. He looks good. He is straight, as far as I'm concerned. He wanted to be a lumberjack or a fisherman." I said, "He's in Gloucester, so he wants to be a fisherman." So I got it, brought him, met him, took him around, let him do odd jobs in my house. "We'll give it a try." So he went fishing. He lasted one week. This is a big husky kid and everything. He says, "Sam, I appreciate you giving me ..." He says, "I just can't do this work. The work is so intense, labor-intensive." And it is. For someone who's never really worked before, whereas fishing families, we're brought into it. I'm used to working. When I first fished with my dad, we used to set out at seven o'clock in the morning, haul back at eight, stay on deck all day until nine o'clock. This was every day, we used to do this. It was all work, all physical work. It was crazy. Today, most of the young can't believe working – they can't do it. They want to know, "Well, how much am I going to get paid?" even before they go out. I said, "Depends on how you work." I think I'm easy. I'm an easy person. I'm not tough on everybody. I give everybody a break. My father said, "You're soft." I'm not really tough on stuff. That's just how I am. That's my nature, easy-going and don't get mad. Everyone's trying to do their best.

MG: Your father was a captain. Can you tell me how his career evolved?

SN: Well, he was the oldest brother in the family. Usually, the oldest gets more. He was the oldest, but he was the smartest, too. I knew all my uncles. He was the smartest. He had that work gumption because his next brother down from him, he didn't have the pull, the work ethic that my dad did. It's like a big puzzle and you try to solve all the pieces. My dad would solve all the pieces. "If you don't work hard, you ain't going to make money." You got to push yourself. You got to have a little pride. Fishing with me mainly was to help my crew make money. That was it. I don't care about – I'm not a money person. As long as I can pay my bills. My wife hates when I tell her that. She says, "What are you going to do now? You got to get another job." I said, "Why can't you get a job."

MG: What was the name of your father's vessel and what kind of boat was it?

SN: It was the *Vincie N*. It was named after my grandmother. In fact, the *Vincie N*. now is the Eleanor in the Boston Tea Party. Did you know that?

MG: Yes, I heard it was being used in the Boston Tea Party Museum.

SN: Yes, the Boston Tea Party where they do the reenactments of throwing tea over. That's where. I had the boat. I said, "Here's the boat. It's seventy, eight years [old]. What am I going to do with it? Take it out and sink it?" What happened is we donated it to the Heritage Fund. We raised money for it. My mother did a great job raising money and all that. So find out, the money they were raising – they told us we were going to have a school. We were going to teach people how to fish and all that. That never happened. They just got all the money for their salaries. Then they got the boat, which we gave to them. They sold it to whoever organization owns the Boston Tea Party. It's a [inaudible] group. I have a bitter feeling. These people took advantage. But now they have another guy working there. In fact, I got some stuff from down my cellar. They're going to put the *Vincie N.*'s pilothouse out in the wharf with a steering wheel. We have a thing – have you ever been in there?

MG: No.

SN: The *Vincie N.*, they have a thing there; my mother's talking, me talking [about] the old pilothouse, the way it was. He wants to put it out on the wharf. My old sonar I had in the cellar, they're going to put it in and try to rig it up.

MG: Tell me a little bit more about your mother. She was such an instrumental advocate for Gloucester fishermen and she founded the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association.

SN: Yes. That was her. She loved to cook fish. She's wrapped into it. I'll tell you a little. My mother, she went to school. She went to St. Ann's School. I don't think she graduated, but she could speak English. Her father couldn't speak English. So, she would go around and make deals with the people because people spoke English, and my grandfather couldn't speak English. [inaudible] You know what I'm trying to say?

MG: Yes. I read that she was a translator.

SN: Yes, translator, but she was a good negotiator for stuff and get things done. She was a nurse and she was a cook. She was a great woman, really. She was. You had to know her to appreciate her.

MG: Do you know how she got involved in the Fishermen's Wives Association?

SN: Well, because all these laws were coming, and fisherman had to go fishing. She just gets some women together. "Look, our husbands can't go, so we have to go fight for them," That's how it basically got started. Then she was doing cookouts to raise money, introduced a new species of fish. She was quite active in it. Really quite active in it, all parts of fishing. People in the United States, they do need the fishermen's wives for their support because the guys are fishing. You go fishing and when you come home you're exhausted; you've been up three, four days. I got to go to meetings. All the meetings they used to have are all bull-crap. Everything was planned before. It's crazy. You go to meetings, they let you talk, but guess what? Their ears are closed. Their mind's closed. I still would like to know who is the head person. Who's the head? You don't really know. I look at what they did to the city of Gloucester. When I first started fishing, they were three people who worked for NOAA Fisheries in the post office, three

people. There were 2500 fishermen. Now it's 2500 people [in NOAA] and three fishermen alive. I always tell the people, fishermen made National Marine Fisheries what it is today. You wouldn't be anyplace. They spend so much money. Have you ever been to the places down in Woods Hole? All the stuff they have. Oh my god. "Well, we have to keep doing that." I said, "What for? There ain't no more fishermen left. All the fishermen are basically gone." They could put fishing back the regular way it was with the quotas – quotas are jokes anyway. I think my last year I was allowed 32,000 pounds for the year, which is crazy. That's so, so nutty. I'm telling them, "Look, let's go back to the old-fashioned way of fishing where they were all eastern rigs." They only could tow fifteen fathoms, thirty fathoms of wire. You know what I'm talking about?

MG: Maybe explain it for the tape.

SN: Usually, when you tow a net, what you catch – fish herd on the bottom. So if you put your wire down it makes a cloud, and the fish will stay inside the cloud, just like cattle. They will stay right in that, and you catch a whole bunch of fish. So when the eastern rigs came, they could only use thirty fathoms because they couldn't set the nets out because there was a side trawler and you had to make a circle. [inaudible] circle. So then came the stern trawlers; they didn't have to make a circle. So they could put a hundred-fathom ground cable, hundred fathom [inaudible] hundred-fathom nets, so they cover vast areas compared to what was covered before. That's what happened to all the fish. Four-inch thick – there were millions of boats everywhere you'd go. I cry because at night I used to go out here, you could see a hundred boats go out every night. Now, if you see one, two boats go out – wow. Right now, we're fishing up in Ipswich Bay. There used to be forty boats every morning – go out, go in. There are three boats doing it now. It's so disappointing. The fish are still here. We can't catch them. NOAA Fisheries, the science is ten years behind times. I don't know what they see. I said, "Look, you need fishermen, coastal fishermen, experienced [fishermen]." There are some good fishermen and there are some bad fishermen. But as myself, there are more good fishermen left because you're not making the money you made. Today, fishing is a part-time job.

MG: So you do it because you love it?

SN: You go to do it if you love it. I think because I want to save it. I just can't see these people – I mean, they're educated and all, but they don't know that much about the ocean, and they're making the rules and regulations. It discourages me more than anything.

MG: Just now you were describing the nets, and you said you had a story about that.

SN: Okay. There was this girl. We were tied to the wharf. See, I had an eastern rig boat, most of my life. All of this stuff is over at my sister's house. I had an eastern rig boat. You know what an eastern rig is?

MG: Can you explain it for the tape?

SN: An eastern rig is – you used to fish off the side. You used to throw your net over, and the wind would blow the net away from there, and then you can make a circle and set out. So this

girl comes down. She's from California. We were tied up. She was looking at the boat. She goes, "What kind of boat is this?" I said, "It's a dragger." She looked at me. She says, "This can't be a dragger because you'd get the net in the wheel every time you threw it over." She didn't know the thing. "You'd get it in the propeller." She said, "You're kidding me. I'm from California. We have stern trawlers. They just drop the net and they go ahead. You can't do that." I said, "No." She said, "I don't believe you." I said, "Well, you know what it is? We get another boat. We get there and we tow that boat this way, and put our net over." She looked at me [and] laughed. She wouldn't believe that's how we did it. You can see the boat, put the net, and make the circle. But that's what happened. These stern trawlers, they were covering – I used to figure it out – ten times the area that a regular side trawler would go because you're off the side. That's what took a lot of fish away. I tell them now – National Marine [Fisheries Service] – I say, "Hey, look. You need gear restriction. You got to restrict gear. Fishermen are going to complain in the beginning, but it's supply and demand. They're going to get more money for their fish. They're going to catch less fish, and you will be doing their job, and the fishermen will be doing their job, and you'll be saving fish." I've been trying to – for twenty years now I've been trying to push that point. [inaudible] It's crazy.

MG: Do you remember your first time fishing?

SN: Yes, I was nine years old. We were seining in Gloucester Harbor. We made a set right off Cressy Beach. That's where Stage Fort Park is. We got nine thousand pounds of mackerel. All mackerel like that big. That's the first time I was on the boat. I was nine years old. We all started young. What was the funny part about it, I always got seasick. I'd get seasick today. If you go out when it's calm, it's good. But you go out when it's rough, blech. It makes you get seasick a lot. I used to be a little kid, probably nine, ten years old. I used to look on the water. I used to just keep looking down. I used to get seasick.

MG: Were you worried that would hamper your fishing career?

SN: No, I never really thought about it. Afterward, you would get used to it. You'd get used to the waves, the water. Then it was part of your life. I remember you'd be there, and you listen to the stories of the older guys. They were great stories. You had some good, good crewmates. I remember these guys used to go to Boston to fish. They'd go and, I think, they used to all get drunk. They used to wear suits out fishing. A guy said, "Well, you take the first watch, you take the second watch." So everybody would be sleeping all at once. "It's your watch." "What do you mean?" They'd jump the clocks. We had all kinds of stories. Then there used to be all kinds of nicknames for fishermen. Crazy. Everyone had a different name. It was cool. It was really cool. It's all going to be lost though, except maybe for you saving some.

MG: That's the goal of this project. I would love to get as many stories from the past as possible on the record and hear about how you evolved in the fishing industry. Did you work part-time on boats since the age of nine?

SN: Yes. We always went fishing during the summer. Through high school, I always went fishing. Then after, "You ain't going to college?" I did try. My mother was a great cook; she wrote cookbooks [inaudible] Fishermen's Wives. I'm a pretty good cook myself. She [said],

“Go to cooking school.” She liked the idea. I went to the CIA [Culinary Institute of America]. That was the best cooking school in the country, really. But the dean told me, “You’re the first guy ever to leave.” I said, “Not for anything, you cook all these rich foods and you have to eat them.” So I gained weight. I said, “I can’t go on like this.” I got there, and then I had to go in the service. That was it. Then I came out of the service [and] started fishing again.

MG: Were you drafted?

SN: No, I could have been. I had to join. Where I went, Gloucester High School, we had ROTC [Reserve Officers’ Training Corps]. I hated the Army. I would never go in the Army. I couldn’t stand it. All my family that did go went in the Navy, so I joined the Navy.

MG: Well, tell me about that. This must have been around the Vietnam War era.

SN: Yes. 1964 to ’67. Yes, that’s when I went in.

MG: Where did you do your training?

SN: Boot camp you mean?

MG: Yes.

SN: Great Lakes. What becomes of it now – I worked in the boiler room and I got asbestos poisoning.

MG: What happened?

SN: Asbestos gets in your lungs, and that’s it. See, that’s the machine. I have to make air and everything.

MG: This is from boot camp?

SN: No, on the ship. I was on an aircraft carrier. What was funny about it is your work with asbestos. Back then they didn’t know it was bad, but it was bad. So I got it. I think I was out of the service [for] twenty years. They said, “We took x-rays. You got something going on in your chest. It’s asbestos poisoning.”

MG: Are you covered for that?

SN: Who’s covering me? No. Just now they’re going to give me a hundred percent disability. What kills me – I love working outside in the yard, and I couldn’t do it. I told the people – I said, “Look. There’s one thing you got to do.” “First of all,” the girl says, “you got problems with your heart. Your heart doesn’t pump enough blood. I said, “Really?” She said, “Yeah.” So I went through the heart thing. No. They say, “Your heart’s good.” So finally they said, “Yeah, you got it.” So I’m a hundred percent disability now. Like I told them – they gave me the oxygen, and I make air in it. I said, “You saved my life because I couldn’t go outside and

work.” I can’t go walking today; it kills me. I need air or something like that. But I try to stay away from it. It’s just part of life. I was dealt the cards.

MG: Does that affect you on the boat?

SN: Oh, yes. I had to really stop fishing because I couldn’t breathe at times when the wind would blow, but they don’t listen to you. They try to say – well, I went to the guy; he was supposed to judge me. He says, “Oh, asbestos.” [inaudible] This was about twenty years ago. He said, “Oh, yeah. I was just sitting on this desk here. They were working on the building. A big piece of asbestos come land right on the desk right in front of me.” He says, “Nothing’s wrong with me.” I said to myself, “This guy’s an idiot.” Here I worked with it day and night, put it around pipes. [inaudible] one time. I said, “Forget about it.” They’re tough. That’s what they do. They say, “Well, we see a lot of young guys. Everyone’s trying to get disability.”

MG: Tell me a little more about your service in the Navy. Did you go to Vietnam?

SN: No, it was a joke. I joined the Navy to go around the world. My ship was stationed – in fact, when I first went out, I went to Europe. I went to London. So I go to London. They said, “Your ship didn’t make the trip.” So they put me on another ship. So I was in London. They say, “Hey, what can you do? Do you know how to type? We need [inaudible].” I go, “No, I don’t know how to type.” So I stayed there for about a month. So another ship came. They put me on this other ship. I was on that ship. That’s the one I stayed on, the USS Essex; it was an aircraft carrier. It was stationed right here in Rhode Island, Quonset Point [Naval Air Station]. That’s where I was most of my time. Half the time I was in Boston because we were down in Gitmo [Guantanamo Bay Naval Base], and the captain ran aground, and that’s a no-no. He lost his job. We were in Boston Shipyard for about two years fixing it. That was my service. But I really think the service is good for everybody. I think it was a good thing. Teach you to take orders, listen to people and learn. Today a lot of kids, you can’t tell them. They get blown up and everything. To me, I’d make service a must for people. I really would.

MG: Were you relieved to get out when you did in 1967?

SN: Yes. I got out. I made it [inaudible] high. They wanted me to reenlist, but now I’m glad that I got out because of the asbestos. Because I would have been dead by now. Probably if I smoked, too, I would have been dead. Have you ever seen [mesothelioma] on television all the time? You see the ad?

MG: Yes.

SN: That’s what I’m going to get. That’s what I’m going to die from. Well, they are the cards I was dealt. You can’t do anything about it. I accept it. Well, if I die, that’s what I’m going to get. Or killed some other way. Who knows? But it’s in the cards. You can’t change it. I accept it.

MG: So in 1967, when you got out of the service, did you come back to Gloucester?

SN: Yes, went back to Gloucester. My father said, “Well, you’ll come fishing.” Eventually, after two years, I was the captain. I went through the learning process. It was tough in the beginning because my dad was like a top skipper. He made big money. He was a highliner really. Then after you got some people saying, “Well, this kid, you got to learn.” Fishing, you’re not born with it; you have to learn. I always say, “There are fishermen and there are fishermen.” Fishing captains, a lot of people say, “Well, what’s a fishing captain.” I worked my way from the bottom of the bilge up to be a captain, where a lot of guys just become captains. In 1970, I went to Europe on a fishing thing with a whole bunch of Americans. I was in Aberdeen, Scotland. The captain comes down. He comes down with a briefcase. I go, “What’s that?” He goes, “This is everything I know.” He put the things in and they were so far ahead of us, it was unbelievable. They were twenty years ahead of us.

MG: What do you mean?

SN: In fishing, in their technology. They’d take the boat out – you could drive the boat and everything was right there [inaudible] everything had to be in our minds. But, it was cool. I was in Europe for about two months. We went all to different countries. They were so far advanced over American fishermen, it was pathetic really.

MG: What was the purpose of this trip?

SN: To see different world fishing. It was trying to teach foreign technology and American technology, just show the difference. This was sponsored by big net companies in Europe, like Germany and all these other companies that try to get stuff into America. It was really something. It was crazy. In fact, I went fishing, and the boat, which I thought was cool – these English guys, every time they’d haul the net back, they’d put the fish on the boat, and then they’d go down and have tea before they worked on it. So they kept on doing it. So they had a little bit of fish. Probably five minutes, they would have been done. I said, “Where are you guys going?” “Oh, we’re going to go have our tea.” “But in five minutes, you could be all done.” “Oh, no, [inaudible]. We don’t do that. Don’t try to change our way.” That’s what they did. The funny part about it too was this guy – I think his name was (Woolston?) out of Aberdeen, and he gave me the blueprints for his net. In fact, the blueprints he gave me is what the nets we use today are. The funny part about it – my father was a great net maker. He got the blueprint. He made this net. This was a long time ago before they came in America. The first tow, we lost it. It was crazy. Gone on a wreck. I couldn’t believe it. But that’s the nets we use today.

MG: Were there other differences you were noticing, not just in technologies, but in how the fisheries were managed?

SN: Well, they really believed in quality because the boat I went out [on], only stayed out three, four days. I think I see pictures of it now – individual cartons, good product, and all that. I believe in a good product. I always tell the guys, “Take care of the fish you got because this is where you’re going to get [inaudible]. If you don’t take care of your fish, you’re going to have a bad name and it’s going to be all crap.” But it was cool. We went through all the countries really.

MG: Did someone sponsor that trip, or pay for you to be there?

SN: Yes, I think the state of Massachusetts sponsored us. There was a couple of guys from Maine. What the hell was his name? (Mickey Vereen?) Do you know (Mickey Vereen?)? He was at Sebago Lake. He owned all that area.

MG: That name sounds familiar. He might be in the Voices collection.

SN: He should be; he's a character. Really, he's a character. He was way older than me. I was the youngest kid. I was twenty-one, twenty-two years old. All the other guys were older than me.

MG: It seems like the 1950s to the 1980s was the heyday for fishermen in Gloucester.

SN: That's right.

MG: What made it the heyday for fishermen?

SN: The stern trawlers. As soon as they got the stern trawlers, that's where the big money came. You got to remember – there was no enforcement. They told us just to go fishing. Then all at once, in – I remember – 1990, my brother, he's a scientist guy. He worked with a lot of Washington people and all that. He told me, "Sam, get out of fishing." "Why?" He said, "The United States wants to trade technology for foreign fish." I said, "No, that ain't never going to happen. Never." 1990, they changed the laws. We used to be able to bring in eight hundred pounds of codfish a day. We were allowed. That was the law. The new law came in. So I went fishing. We hauled back and we had 3200 pounds of codfish. I hate waste. I won't throw it overboard. We're on an eighty-foot boat now. Me and my son are operating it by ourselves. People can't believe that we did. The eighty-foot boat we're operating by ourselves. He said, "What are we going to do? We're only allowed eight-hundred pounds." I said, "Well, since we're on the black box, they know we're in. We got to call up and all that. We'll take the next four days off." Made sense to me. So we go in, and the game warden there – he goes, "How much codfish you got?" I go, "3200." He said, "How many days you went out." I said, "We just went out today." He said, "You're only supposed to have eight hundred pounds." "Yeah, I know, but we ain't going to go fishing for the next four days. You can see it. We won't even go." He goes, "No, you're in violation." I said, "I'm in violation? I'm not going to go for the next four days. That'd be the 3200 pounds." He says, "No, we want you to go out every day and catch your eight hundred pounds and dump all the rest over." I said, "That don't make sense." He said, "Yeah, that's right. That's what we want you to do." I said to myself, "Wow, it can't get worse than this." This was 1990. And it's gotten way worse, now with the observers and all that stuff. It's crazy what they come up [with]. Where do these people get these ideas? There's too much politics into fishing. You got to take the politics out of fishing. You got to get people who know the ocean to make the rules and regulations. I tell them, "Hey, I'd volunteer my time to work with you guys to let you know." They don't want it. They don't want [inaudible]. I talk to NOAA. "Oh, we have our own people. Thanks for offering, but we have our own people." I say, "Yeah, okay." Kind of bums you out, but that's my goal.

MG: It seemed like fishing was fun in the '50s, '60s, and '70s.

SN: It was.

MG: Tell me about what made it fun.

SN: You were free. You had no restrictions. You didn't have to call up. You didn't know if you caught a fish they were going to fine you. You got too many small dabs; you got to throw them over. It was crazy. There were crooked fishermen, I have to admit. I know one guy. We were fishing near him. We were fishing and going out. You could smell the guy was cooking lobsters on his boat, which is a no-no. You can't do that. It's illegal. So he's cooking. So I go there. He sees me. We're allowed a hundred lobsters a day. So I went. I made a tow. I was just looking around. He goes, "Sam, where are you going?" I said, "This ain't for me," because I ain't going to kill fish for nothing. Two days later, he got booted by the Coast Guard. They caught him for an illegal codend. So, to myself, I say, "That's good." I hate crooked fishermen. I really do. I go by the law. These guys do whatever they want. So the next time he went out, he put a new net and went back right out again. Usually, the Coast Guard, if they boot you, they won't boot you for another month, but they boot him the next day, and they caught him again. So this guy's out of fishing now. They said, "You're out. You can't fish. Sell your permits." He lived in Boston. His wall was full of money. He dealt in cash, selling to the restaurants and all that. A lot of people were involved, really. People you wouldn't think could be involved in it, they were all involved in it. He was crooked. Crooked fishermen – what are you going to do? They take the chance. Some people say, "Good luck to them." I wasn't brought up that way.

MG: He was selling lobster directly to restaurants.

SN: Yes, lobster meat. He used to cook them. Small mesh, so you'd get the small ones, the big ones. There was some bad guys fishing. There really was. There really was. That wasn't in my – I wasn't brought up that way. I never knowingly broke the law, but I broke the law not knowingly because the rules are so stupid.

MG: Tell me more about heyday times. Do any stories stand out to you?

SN: Oh, there are tons of them. This is a good story, I think. My mother and father, they told me, "Son, when you take the boat, there are two things you don't do. you never fish on Saint Joseph's Day, Saint Peter's Day, or Good Friday." I said, "Sure. No problem." So this was the eve of Saint Joseph's Day. Now, this is someplace I always go. I know it really, really good. I'm real good on bottom. I know lots of bottom from here all the way to Maine, the gullies. I'm pretty good at that. So you don't fish that day. I said, "Okay." So we're fishing that day. We're catching good fish. So now it's 11:30. In another hour, it was going to be Saint Joseph's Day. I said to myself, "Do you think Saint Joseph would mind if I tow a half an hour longer?" Guess what? Saint Joseph minds, believe me. It took me eight hours to get the net up on the boat, loaded with rocks. Really. This was someplace I always fished. It took me five hours to tow the boat because the boat was all full of rocks. As soon as we got outside the breakwater, the [inaudible] broke the net, and everything got lost. So I go home. My mother says, "What are you doing? I told you, you don't fish [on] Saint Joseph's [Day]." "You know, Ma, I'll never

fish Saint Joseph's Day again," and I never have since then. I said, "You're right. That was bad fishing today." Now, this is five years later, six years later. So we just bought a brand new boat, the *Captain Novello*. We went down to Bayou La Batre, [Alabama], me and my son; we picked it up and we were fishing. Now, here's another place. I knew the place like the back of my hand. It's called the Grand Opening. You know where the Grand Opening is? It's been closed for so long, and this will be the first fish going there. So my son goes, "Let's go try it." I go, "No, it's Saint Peter's Day. We can't go." He says, "What's going to happen? You know where all the wrecks are. What could basically happen?" So he kept on. "No," I said, "I don't want to go, I can't. My mother said not to go." So he kept on conning me. He said, "Look, we'll go out that night and we'll haul back." Because my mother usually does Saint Peter's Fiesta. I don't know if you know what that is. They have Fiesta. My mother, she used to do big spreads. We used to have floats and all that. So he conned me in. "Okay, we'll go in. We'll haul back at six o'clock in the morning." I told my mother, "We'll be home at nine o'clock." That was good. We did it. We haul back in the morning, all at once. "What the heck happened?" One of the winches broke. "What the hell?" So finally, it took us probably until one, two o'clock. We had to unhook the net from one side. We had a big set of fish then. So we put everything on the boat. So now it's like two, three o'clock in the afternoon. I said, "Boy, this ain't going to be a very good show." So we're only two people, me and my son. He had the hose. We had a lot of fish, a lot [inaudible]. I said, "Hey, what's wrong with this hose?" "Oh, it ain't nothing. Don't worry about it." So we're going. Another half an hour, the alarm goes off on the boat. The bilge – the boat was up to the thing with water. The hose broke down the fish hole. The fish were in the engine room, and it got all full of water. I said, "What the shit?" We had to stop another hour. So now it's five, six o'clock. We're coming in. My mother was – "What the hell did you do?" Then my wife goes to me, "Well, the kids want to go ride. Can I have some money?" I lost my wallet, too. That was Saint Peter's Day. I said, "Never again will I fish then." That's true. That's a true story. Hard to believe, but it's a true story. The black evils. You never would think that. It was crazy.

MG: Were fishermen treated differently during those days?

SN: Definitely. Definitely. This is the way they used to be. Let's see. Wooden ships, iron men. Then, iron ships and wooden men. Today, there are plastic ships and drunken men. There are no fishermen left. There are no fishermen. You can't find any. I really feel bad about that. My boat, I really don't want to sell it. My son wants to sell it. He's buying a marina. I said, "Gloucester doesn't have someone to train people, someone to know that there's nothing left." I volunteer to help anyone to learn. Now I'm getting involved with the Heritage Company. We're going to do just what I'm doing now – talk, talk about fishing – because people really don't know too much about fish. I went to the mayor of the city of Gloucester. I told her, "Look, you got the fishermen's statue down here." That's a come-on. People come down here. I want to go down there – I don't want to get paid – to let people know about Gloucester fishing, how it was, the way it should be, the bad points about foreign fish, imported fish. All of America should eat American codfish instead of slave labor fish. You don't know where the fish comes from. People used to use dynamite. "Oh, my husband used to use dynamite catching fish in Russia," she says. It didn't go. I told the mayor I'd do it. It was free time. But it never worked out.

MG: What would you want them to know about what Gloucester used to be like? What would you tell them?

SN: Tell them the way – you could walk across the boats it was so many people. So many people fished. It's almost [inaudible]. It's like a sporting event. The competition against other people – who are the biggest money-makers. What would you call a highliner fisherman today? In the past, what was a highliner fisherman? A highliner fisherman caught the most fish. But today, you wouldn't want to be a highliner fisherman because you're catching all the fish, you're destroying all the things. It's so different. A highliner fisherman is someone that probably goes by the rules and regulations. As a fisherman, I know these things are wrong – the rules and regulations – so why would anyone –? The concept of fishing is so different between fishermen and people who are pushing it upon us. It really, really is. You need cameras; you need this. It's crazy. You have no incentive. Then the observers on boats. Here's a person who's going to come watch you catch fish, and he's making more than my crew. An observer, they get seven hundred, and my crew only makes two hundred dollars a day. But I'd say there's a lot of problems with that now because a lot of these people who go as observers, they know what they're doing isn't really true. They're on the fishing side, but they're getting paid because they're getting out of college and this is their first job. There was one girl; she was counting the fish that we were cooking to eat. "That's part of your catch, [inaudible] rocks. That's part of your catch." "Okay. You do your thing; we do our thing." It's crazy.

MG: I can't imagine they fit in very well on the boat.

SN: No, no. They don't. Some of them are good, some of them are bad. If you have a good one, I tell them, "You ain't going to be doing this job long because you know it ain't right what you're doing." You can see what the fishermen do. They're catching fish. You got to throw them overboard. You can't catch them. What are you supposed to do? You got a net full of fish, what are you supposed to do with them?

MG: You describe how the fish get the bends.

SN: Oh, yes. They're always dead. They're dead. Most fish are dead. Like the guy – I'm going to catch 3200 pounds of codfish, save eight hundred and throw the rest away? What purpose is that serving? Just to get us out of business.

MG: How would it work before the regulations?

SN: We'd bring them in. There should have been a little more law in the beginning. It was like the Wild West. Do what you want. You go where you want. No enforcement. Even today, there's very little enforcement. The only guys that get hurt are the guys that really go by the law, like me. Some other guys do take chances. You like to see them get caught, but you say, "Well, the guy's got enough guts to do it, let him." Everybody knows who the bad people are fishing. I knew who they were. No big thing. We're all created equal.

MG: Were there any challenges when there were lots of boats and lots of fishermen, before the regulations?

SN: The only thing would be the competition. The boats would get close to each other. I don't know. Some guys got more – I've heard boats going and getting the other guy's net, cutting his other net, taking the fish, and going away. That's happened to people. I've known that. They took his net away because they snarled up with him. "Well, I'll teach you when I take your fish." Some people are crazy out there.

MG: Is there less of that now?

SN: There's no fishermen left. It's ridiculous. It's so pitiful. I go out there, and I look – forty, fifty boats going out in the morning, every day, all come in. All the ships would go to New York or wherever. It's all gone. There's no fishermen left. I don't know what's going to happen all these fish — probably going to have to hire foreign people to come in and catch them eventually. But then there's another problem I think that's got to be faced, is global warming or pollution because I notice fish are going deeper and deeper and deeper for cleaner waters, to live, for spawn. I see a lot of dead spawning fish now. We are polluting the ocean — fertilizers, whatever. Nothing's doing about it. I go to Florida in the winter. I don't know if you know, in Florida, there's Lake Okeechobee. That's a disaster. When I first [inaudible] water used to beautiful, clean. All these environmentalists, I call them up. "Why don't you come on down here, fix this place up." It's crazy. I deal with sometimes environmentalists from the West Coast talking about stuff. I challenge them. I say, "What do you know about the East Coast? You're on the West Coast. Why are you supporting this? You don't even know what you're talking about." But they all stick together. They will not confront you. You say your thing. They say their stuff — a lot of bad publicity from people. The news is always bad. You hear always about the bad fishing. Bad this, bad that. Never about the good people. Bad news, that's it.

MG: How long did you fish with your dad on his vessel?

SN: Let's see. I fished in school. Ten years with him. The same old boat. I put a lot of time in that boat, most of my life.

MG: When did you get your own boat?

SN: I went and bought a boat. I think my father passed by then. My boat was too old to go out. It was sixty-something years old. I used to go far. It's an older boat. The nails and that — so we went looking for [inaudible]. Me and my son, we went from Texas all the way to Florida looking for boats. That was a good trip. I found a little boat. We bought it, and that was it.

MG: What kind of boat?

SN: It was a sixty-foot stern trawler. There must be pictures someplace. Then, two years ago, he says, "I want a bigger boat." So we got a bigger boat. Now he says, "I don't want to fish anymore. I want a marina. Too many rules. Too many regulations. I can't take it. I can't find no one to go fishing. No dependable people." All different things like that. I said, "I don't blame you." It's pretty hard. The boat's for sale. We have people interested in it. My heart tells me I'd rather see the boat stay in Gloucester. I would train people to become fishermen on it. I'm old now, seventy-six, seventy-seven. I got my medical problem that doesn't help.

MG: Tell me more about the fishing you've done – what you fish for and how it's changed throughout your career?

SN: Well, I've always done mostly bottom fishing, drag fishing. I've gone shrimping, which was a good thing. I like shrimping. That's gone because we caught all the shrimp. We don't believe that. Global warming – everything's moving north. The herring fishing, which I really enjoyed. That was day fishing. You made good money, but everything was a lot of work compared to today. Today you have a lot of – today they've got gutting machines that cut each fish, where we had to do that. My son, he doesn't have a gutting – so they'd be all day cutting two, three-thousand pounds of haddock, where the other one it's all automatic, where they got grants and funded for it.

MG: Remind me of the name of your boat.

SN: *Captain Novello*. The reason I named that – I didn't name it after me. My mother said, "Name it *Captain Novello*." I said, "I don't like it because it's named after me." She says, "No, it's not being named after you. There's a lot of *Captain Novellos* – your father, your uncles. There were a whole bunch of them." I said, "Okay, Ma." So I named it *Captain Novello*. This other one I named *Captain Novello II*. There are pictures in here. You can look at them. I know they're in here.

MG: Did you start with a bigger crew than you ended up with?

SN: No, my crew just got smaller. The first boat [with] my dad, there used to be six guys on it. It ended up, me and my son were fishing by ourselves on it. It was dangerous. You got people today – I know a guy on an eighty-foot boat, fishing all by himself. He calls himself Superman. When I see people [inaudible], it ain't safe. A lot of people – Al [Cottone] does that; he goes fishing by himself. You really don't know. The wrong move, that's it. No one knows. You're all done by yourself. What are you going to do?

MG: Talk about that a little bit, the hazards of the job. Have you had any close calls?

SN: Well, yeah. Basically, the weather. You got to know the weather. Here's a good story. I think I was in high school. My father says, "We're going to go fishing." This was in January. He says, "[inaudible] brings good weather. Light, variable winds." I said, "Oh, really?" He said, "Yeah, we're going to go out. We'll go up the coast of Maine." So we went out fishing. We were up off the Isles of Shoals, up in Maine. We made a tow. Then it started blowing. It blew twenty, thirty, forty, fifty miles an hour. Freezing cold. It was a cold snap. We started icing up. So my dad said, "Put everything away. We're going to go in." We went way, way against the land to get the lee, so it wouldn't be as rough because the wind was nor'west. We go by the Isles of Shoals. There's this guy hanging on to a buoy and a boat. So we stop, and we picked him up. There are three people on this boat. The boat all awash, all covered with ice, freezing cold. Believe me, ice. As soon as the [inaudible] turned to ice. We picked these three guys up. The guy says, "This is the worst day of my life." We said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I just bought this boat. This is my first trip." He says, "[inaudible] brought light, variable winds. So we thought it was a good day for fishing. We were coming down to go fishing, my

truck slipped in ice, and I smashed my truck up. Then we went fishing.” So the guy didn’t know what he was doing. When you go into wind, you’re supposed to slow down, but this guy kept on going faster and faster. So he pounded – it was an old boat. All the wood [inaudible] so all the seams opened up and the engine stalled. These people were dead if we didn’t come by. So we picked them up. We got them and all that. So we took them to Gloucester. Then my dad said, “Let’s tow the boat in. Save the boat for the guy anyway.” So he put a line on it. So we’re towing this boat in the bitter cold. One of the guys that was on the boat, he was a middle-aged guy, and he says, “You got a knife?” I said, “What do you want a knife for?” He said, “You got a knife?” I said, “Yeah, I got plenty.” So I give him my knife. He runs out to the back of the boat and cuts the boat loose that we were towing. I said, “What the hell did you do that for?” He says, “I just thought things were going so bad that that boat was going to come down and sink us.” It was crazy. I said, “Wow.” What people do with the weather. Those guys, they would have died if we didn’t come across them. You had to watch the weather. I had an old boat, and I used to fish harder in the weather. In the wintertime, my main days were fishing. I used to fish from October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May. June, July, August, September, I used to stay in. But you used to make your big money back then in the winter when no one fished. Fish were scarce. Fish was way higher then than it is today. The price of fish was crazy then. That’s how I always fished. Once in a while, the farther you’d go, you’d get more fishing. Same thing: [inaudible] brought light, variable winds. We went outside. It took me four days to get home – the wrong weather. Crazy. But you had to know the weather. Another thing: you have to know your boat. You see a lot of boats sink because different crews, people really don’t know what goes on, on the boats. They just say, “Ain’t my boat. The hell,” and it sinks. It’s crazy.

MG: That reminds me to ask about the Andrea Gail.

SN: The Andrea Gail? Yes. We weren’t fishing because it was rough. In fact, after that, the Wall Street Journal called me. Someone told them that I was hiring people to go out to find the perfect storm. This is a true story. They called me. “Captain Novello, I hear you’re looking for people to get a crew to go find the perfect storm.” I said, “Where’d you get that?” “Well, that’s the rumor in Gloucester.”

MG: I don’t understand why someone would want to find the perfect storm.

SN: To go through the tough weather, [to say], “Wow, we went through that weather.” It was crazy. That happened completely opposite than how it [was depicted]. Did you see the picture, [The Perfect Storm]?

MG: The movie? Yes. Tell me what you mean. How did it really happen?

SN: It didn’t happen that way. That boat was a piece of junk. I’m serious. It was a sixty-foot boat. It should have never been out there. It was all closed in, had extra fuel on it. It happened when the boat was coming in. It just took one big wave because the wind was northeast, and they had to go southwest. They took one big sea, and that was it. They’re all gone — nothing against the people and all that. I call them people high fishermen. They’re not true fishermen. They’re out to make big money fast. Typical fishermen, it’s a lifetime job. You’re never going

to get rich being a fisherman unless you're a crooked fisherman or you take chances that you shouldn't take.

MG: Was it easier to make a living "back in the day"?

SN: Definitely. To me, today, fishing is a part-time job for most of the boats. The bigger boats are making good money, but the work is labor-intensive. I hear these guys; they're making eighty, ninety-thousand dollars a year for the crew, which is big money. I think the biggest year I ever had was probably forty, fifty-thousand. That's as a captain. I used to work hard. I was fishing more than I was home.

MG: Let's talk now about how things started to change for fishermen. Was the Magnuson-Stevens Act the first big change?

SN: Yes.

MG: What did that do?

SN: What basically happened was we were fishing – finally, National Marine Fisheries [Service] says, "Oh, we want to know where you fish." "Why?" "Forget about it. We just want to know. Nothing will become of it." So, all right. Where we fished - the Gulf of Maine closure and all that, that's where I lived. I had to learn fishing all over again because they closed all that down. I had to learn to fish all over again. I said, "You people said ..." "Well, you know ..." It was supposed to be closed for five years. Now it's been almost twenty-five years they've closed it. There must be a lot of fish in there by now. They keep taking, taking from the fishermen, and then never giving anything.

MG: What was that process like where you felt you had to learn to fish all over?

SN: I had a new bottom. Where I was making my money, I couldn't go anymore. So I had to come inshore more with the boats that were the closed areas. They closed the high places where I fished personally. Really (wreaked?) me. I had to learn fishing all over. I just wonder, "How much fish was in these spots that are there today." They won't even let you in. Saying, "Hey, we want to do research." They close this; they close that. They got these habitat things – another big joke. People say, "Well, this is good habitat. How do you people know? Habitat for what? Just because it's a place that you don't think that people should go?" Another big thing that irks me is dead areas. There are dead areas in the ocean, in the Gulf of Maine, ever since I started fishing. I used to be a seek-and-destroy guy. So I used to ask my grandfather, "How about there? I'm going to go fish there. It looks like a great spot and all that." He says, "Don't waste your time. There's never been fish there." But NOAA goes and tows there, and goes against us – "Oh, this is a spot we randomly picked." Why would you want to go where there's no fish? You can't even get an idea [inaudible]. I went on a twenty-one-day cruise with the Albatross.

MG: Yes. Tell me about that.

SN: First of all, the people that knew you were a fisherman, they said, “What you see, you’re not going to like.” I said, “Okay.” So I went fishing. My little sixty-foot boat I just bought, the net was bigger than theirs. Here they are. They use five-fathom leagues – five fathom. I’m using thirty. They’re towing one mile at three miles an hour. So the net they had would not tend bottom because it’s a big giant boat towing a little net, and the thing was just bouncing and bouncing. So you never really caught any fish. I would say, “Well, you just ain’t catching any fish.” They say, “Well, we’re not here to catch fish. We’re just getting a sample of it.” But during the times the regulations changed, their thing was that’s the availability of fishing through what they see, which was they’re using a net that doesn’t fish. It’s crazy because different fish act different. See, the boat they have now, they catch the high fish. That’s why you can catch haddock. Haddock’s high fish. Codfish is a low fish. It goes under the nets. But they don’t [inaudible].

MG: How were you selected to go on the Albatross?

SN: They picked a bunch of fishermen, and I just happened to be a fisherman. I’d be a good candidate because I think from way back, I’ve had a – well, people like me. I’m a straight-shooter. I’m not a money person. Money doesn’t keep me going. “I’ll give you this and that.” I’d rather see things done straight, what the laws are. I like to help people. I’m a helper. That’s the way I’d be. Help people do stuff. Get the true picture of what’s happening in the ocean because I got tons and tons of stuff that I write. It’s all in here. I don’t know if you followed it.

MG: I saw a lot of your letters online.

SN: Sometimes I get sick of writing them, but at times I look – I say, “People don’t know, so I might as well put my two cents out there.” I have history. I know what I’m talking about. Who would you give a boat to if you want to go catch fish? Well, this other guy – they just got a new guy. What’s his name, the regional director? [Editor’s Note: Mr. Novello is referring to Michael Pentony, the Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries’ Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.] He’s the new guy. He gave me a break. I’d been trying to talk about whiting fishing. He opened it up for us to go early.

MG: Good.

SN: He opened it.

MG: This year?

SN: Yes.

MG: Say a little more about that for the record. What was your argument about the whiting fish?

SN: Well, I keep on saying, “Look, our ocean’s changing. The fish know it. The fishermen know it. But NOAA don’t know it.” The Management Council don’t know it either. I have no use for them. I’m saying the fish are arriving earlier and leaving sooner. The whiting season

used to be from – when we first went, we used to go in June. From June into November, we used to get whiting in here all the time. The last five years it's been – the season starts July 15th now, which is – I'll just tell you. It's July 15th. I was telling them, "Open it up here. Give us a chance to prove our science." I talked to the state – "Oh, no. We can't do that. We can't do that." So I talked to the New England [Fishery] Management Council – "Oh, no. You can't do that." So I wrote a letter to – I can show you the letter; it's in here – to Mike. He says, "Let's give it a shot," and we did. To me, it was successful. During the prior years, there was so much haddock around, all the small haddock you couldn't tow. They said, "Oh, you're going to catch more bycatch." In fact, the Management Council wrote Mike a letter and said, "You shouldn't do this. These guys are going to do this and that and this." But we did it. I think it proved it. Right now the whiting are going again. The end of July – I can tell because I follow it. When the whiting come in, there's a king whiting. Now, I fished all my life. I always thought a king whiting was a male; it's a female. It should be called queen whiting. When you get a lot of them, that means it's time for them to spawn. As soon they're gone, they're gone. I'd say the fish are probably gone now; they left. The time period – they're changing. The fish cycles are all being changed. But NOAA Fisheries, they know it, or they don't know it. They don't admit it. Their science is old. They're using old news, old science. People follow along because people don't know better. You need more fishermen out there to push the truth out. What's true?

MG: Do you see fish respond to the warming water temperatures?

SN: Warming temperatures. Is warming temperatures global warming? Is warming temperatures pollution? Even the fish spawn you see a lot of – I cut a lot of fish up. That's why I know this. I smoke fish. I have a smoker. I cut a lot of fish. You can see some of the eggs were no good. This has been happening the last five, six years. So something dynamic is going on in the ocean. The lobsters, way down south, there's no more. Everything's moving. They're moving for cooler waters. Yet, NOAA's laws and regulations, they're fifty years old. To me, they're useless. They don't seem to care. It's crazy.

MG: It sounds like a lot of fishermen are leaving the industry, but the ones who remain, how are they adapting to the regulatory changes and the changing climate?

SN: Well, the pollution thing is – there's a line. There's the hundred-fathom edge. If you go on the other side of that hundred-fathom edge, you can make a good living. But inside coastal waters – to me, pollution, warming waters, and different fish are moving in. There's another thing that [inaudible]. Different fish, different species – we get a lot of sea bass. Everything's moving north, and we have no quota for them. Yet, if we have to get them, guess what you have to do to them if you catch them? We have to dump them. I wrote a letter not too long [ago], "Hey, you guys got to help us. You got to help the fishing. Give us a bycatch so we can stay in business." I keep on saying, "There's no more fishermen left. Most of us are gone." I don't know.

MG: Do you need a break at all?

SN: Do I need to take a break? Yes, I'll take a little break. Let me see if I can find some of that stuff.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: Have any politicians have been sympathetic or helpful?

SN: I haven't come across any yet. The only one that would be good would be the people from the West Coast, I think. See right here: "Fish move because of warming temperatures." [Editor's Note: Mr. Novello is pointing out his Facebook feed of articles and posts related to the Gloucester fishing industry.] There's a whole bunch of crap. In fact, Saint Peter [inaudible], they put my boat on the picture, which it's not supposed to be there.

MG: What do you mean?

SN: This is my boat right here that I have now. My cousin, he's like the president, but they wouldn't put the name on it. His name is Joe Novello.

MG: What kind of fish do you smoke?

SN: Mostly whiting, haddock. These other groups seem to be pretty into it. "Saving the future." Here it is. That's my grandfather right there.

MG: Wow. Captain Joseph Novello. Your father's father?

SN: My father's father. Right.

MG: How come your siblings didn't get involved in fishing?

SN: We all went fishing. My father didn't want anyone to fish. He said, "You can do a better job in the work." That's all I seem to write about is fish. That's the only thing that gets me going.

MG: Do you have other interests?

SN: Not really.

MG: Let's talk a little bit more about how the regulations have changed over time. You talked about the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Was the next big thing days-at-sea?

SN: Days-at-sea, they changed. There's my boat now. That's it right there. That's the *Vincie N*.

MG: That's the one that's used for the Boston Tea Party reenactment.

SN: Yes. That's the boat I spent most of my life on right there.

MG: Oh, wow.

SN: My son did that. He's an art illustrator. That's a good picture, down in Florida – Rocky and his friends. I've got birds as friends. Glad you've got friends. But I'm all about fish. I'm a fish person. Whatever. "Warming water, fish communities have no choice but to follow." "Fish are on the move." "Warming ocean slowly."

MG: Does that mean you see fish here that came from –?

SN: Yes, down South. Everything is moving eventually. This year we're catching little bonito in Gloucester Harbor. More fisheries.

MG: What was the impact of days-at-sea?

SN: Days-at-sea?

MG: Yes.

SN: When they changed to put the eight-hundred-pound limit, is that days-at-sea?

MG: When they told you how many days you could be out fishing. I think this was in the early '90s.

SN: I think the quota thing killed everybody.

MG: When did that happen?

SN: That's one of the latest things. They gave us the quota, which was minimal. I've been fishing all my life. There's another thing – trying to be a good guy. There was Gloucester Marine Railway. Some people were running it; it was family. They were trying bankrupt it. The guy that was running it, he used to work for this oil company. We owed this oil company \$300,000.

MG: Who did?

SN: The oil company lent this guy – this guy used to work for this oil company. So he ran the railways. We ended up owing this company \$300,000. Why would someone give someone \$300,000 credit? [inaudible] So they were foreclosing on the railway. So, me, as a stupid person, soft-hearted, I ran for president, and I got elected. I had a deal with it. So what it came down to – we had to sell half the railway to keep the – see the Gloucester Heritage thing? I should show you around the town after. Well, we owned that one. So we had to sell that one to keep this one. That was two years, which I didn't fish because I was working on the railway, and I lost time trying to save the railway.

MG: When was this?

SN: That was probably twenty years ago.

MG: Why was this an important cause for you?

SN: Well, a bunch of Italian families got together to put money into the railway for fishing. We had our own oil, our own ice; it was like a big co-op. So this guy was bankrupting it because he wanted to take it over himself. That's what's probably going to end up – probably like Newport; a big marina's going to be there. Eventually, they're going to change the zoning and all that. I had something to do with it, and I couldn't see that happening. I lost a couple of years getting involved with that, which really – it was crazy. Being president of the railway, you didn't get paid. There was no pay in it.

MG: You gave up fishing for a couple of years to do that.

SN: Yes.

MG: How did your wife feel about that?

SN: She basically didn't know. Well, she got a job there too, working as a secretary a little bit, so that wasn't that bad. But I lost all my quota because they had this certain time period that you fished, and if you didn't fish – and I said, "I fished all my life, and this guy who started fishing five years ago got way more quota than I have." What are you going to do? That's part of the stuff.

MG: When you got back to fishing, how did you cope with the quotas?

SN: I thought they were terrible. What they did was terrible. Things just got worse. Fishermen were treated like you were a crook and a drunk and a drug addict. "Which one are you?" I said, "Hey, I don't break the law." In fact, when I first started fishing, this guy, he was up at NOAA, and he says, "Do you think it's right that you make more money than me, and I've been to college for five years?" I said, "Hey, no one told you to go to college. You could fish and make the same money I did." I just think that's the attitude: "What are these people? They're not educated, but they're making good money and why should they make good money?" Now it's changed. I think a lot of them people had that attitude. They're educated. Fishermen are not educated, but we're ocean-educated.

MG: It seems like your goals are aligned, to not deplete the resources, but the fishermen are harmed in the process.

SN: That's right. There are no more fishermen left. There's no interest. We got a few boats in Gloucester making big money, but they don't want to tell anybody because they don't want the competition. Some of these people here – "Well, I'm making a hundred grand a year fishing." That's almost comparable to what they're making in Alaska and all that, where it's [inaudible]. These few fishermen – fishermen are greedy. They look at it as their fish, their living. Maybe they don't want the competition. I don't know. Some guys, it's all about money. I'm about life and people, whereas [some people are about] the dollar bill.

MG: Do the highs and lows for fishermen come in cycles? Every ten years, it seems like they're faced with a new challenge. Is this another low point with the strict quotas?

SN: Yes, but I don't think it's ever going to come back.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: I wanted to ask how you adapt each time a change or regulation is introduced, such as catch shares and sector management?

SN: If you want to stay fishing, when you're investing in a boat and all that, you have to adapt. You have to. I don't give up. A lot of people would give up. A lot of fishermen have [given] up. They just went, "This is a joke." These people are wrong – management. I blame management more than I blame NOAA; I really do. Because all these people are supposed to be working for us, but it seems like we're working for them. That's my big thing. They should work for us. That's why the politicians – that really bugs me that these politicians don't know anything, but yet, they're pushing it.

MG: Do fishermen talk about climate change?

SN: No. I think most fishermen don't really – all most fishermen think about is fish. They don't look at the big thing. They're looking at the high-end money thing. They don't look at the – most of them, I don't think – there are some guys that look at the big picture. There's probably five out of a hundred that really care about five and really care about fishermen, really care about the infrastructure. That's the way I look at it. It's all about the money. That's the society we live in.

MG: It sounds like fishermen are not worried about climate change because there are so many other things to worry about.

SN: Yes. The climate is changing. The fish are telling the people, but you got to have the people that know fish talk. "Why fish are moving over there? Why is everything –?" Something's going on but doesn't light up a bell. Things are happening. We can't keep going the same way. That's the way I feel about it. There have got to be changes.

MG: It sounds like you have made some really practical suggestions, such as changing the whiting season. You have also written about hatcheries and how Gloucester had a successful hatchery in the early part of the twentieth century.

SN: Yes.

MG: What do you know about that?

SN: They were quite successful, but now they're saying that the big reason they're not going to do it – predators. They're saying all the predators, all the dogfish, will eat everything. Nothing has a chance to grow now. I think that's all malarkey myself. I wrote to the state of

Massachusetts, the state of Maine; all get-together, have a big [inaudible] in the Isles of Shoals and put a big factory out there. No one ever says anything about it. Just: “Shut that guy up.”

MG: Who are your supporters? Who do you feel is on your side?

SN: Well, I think people that know me are on my side because I could just be another loudmouthed fisherman. I have a friend; he’s an MIT graduate, a really smart guy. He went through the whole Magnuson Act. He read all the registers. I call him a good friend. He’s my doctor. He’s my lawyer. He’s just a knowledgeable person. I like him because he looks at it their way, too. I’m a fisherman, but he agrees with me. He can’t believe what happened to the [fisheries]. “How did this happen?”

MG: You’ve also written about how different species interact, such as red and silver hake, and how targeting silver hake can make you go over your red hake quota accidentally.

SN: That there is all gear. That’s a gear [issue]. I can fix that. I told them how to fix it. I told them, “Look, you put the nets like …” In the Gulf of Maine, whiting regulations – our nets are restricted. We have lots of [inaudible]. We have so much wire to use, but down in Southern New England, these guys say, “We use that net,” but they put a hundred fathom, two-hundred fathom of [inaudible]. The more wire you put out in front of the net, the more bycatch you’re going to get, the more fish you’re going to get, the more fish you’re going to destroy. But I don’t know. I talked to NOAA about it. I tell the management people about it. But no one says, “Yeah, let’s try it.”

MG: Is this a situation where the eastern rig trawler would be a more sustainable way of fishing?

SN: Yes, definitely, because they don’t cover the area. These other guys cover probably ten times the area than an eastern rig would fish because you have small nets, you got so much wire. The more wire, the more thing – you just put wire restriction, and you’d save tons of bycatch and tons of fish. I know fishermen hate that because when we first put this net on, I hated it. I said, “Oh, look. You ain’t catching nothing.” But you’re catching the fish you want. You’re not doing the bycatch, and you’re not destroying all these other fish. Down in Southern New England, they killed tons and tons of small yellowtail because they got so much ground cable, it makes the net work dirty. You’re not getting the – I just shake my head all the time, and say, “Hey.” They should listen, but they don’t. They don’t listen to fishermen. Not me. I’m just one person. Go down each coastline, and these guys will tell you what’s the best for the fisheries. They would. But they use a guy that went to school for probably three or four years, read a couple of books – “Yeah, I’m a fishing scientist.” What do you know? That’s how I feel about it.

MG: I read that if you had to do it all over again, you’d fish in Southern New England because the restrictions are less stringent there.

SN: That’s right. Yes. They’re easy.

MG: Does each state make their own determinations? How is it different in Southern New England?

SN: Because the regulations down there are different. Just like up in the Gulf of Maine, I have to use Gulf of Maine restrictions. I got all them papers there. Got to be a certain amount of cans on your net. Down there, they do whatever they want. There's no restriction. I know, for a fact, they're killing tons and tons of fish. They got a gun; they probably want to shoot a guy like me down there – going into their pockets. But, in the long run, they'll be saving themselves. Less fish, you're going to get more money, but you need the import tariff to keep our fishermen comparable with foreign fish.

MG: Are President Trump's recent tariffs impacting the fisheries?

SN: I don't think it's tariffs on fish. Is it? I think our biggest competition probably is South America. They push waves of fish in, and we just buy them. Even the people who sell fish, they're selling all different kinds of fish and calling it something else. There's another thing that needs to be cracked down on. I go to Florida now, and you can't get wild Florida shrimp. Ninety percent of the people use farm-raised shrimp from Vietnam. That's what you're getting. Most people, they don't tell you. If I go in a restaurant, I always ask, "What kind of fish do we get? Do we get foreign, imported, farm-raised?" "We got whatever you want." That's what they tell you.

MG: You've also written about ocean acidification. I don't know a lot about that or how it affects fish.

SN: It affects the eggs and the water and all the acidity. They don't have enough oxygen, and it's killing everything. That's just going to go deeper and deeper. If you go in the harbor – I walk Gloucester Harbor every day. I get up, and I walk. I go down. There should be tons and tons of little fish all around. Very few. People got their fertilizer, their chlorine going into the ocean out there. There are all different aspects. The estuaries are all getting ruined. But then there's pogies, little fish – I think their durability is stronger than some other fish; they're not as sensitive. They're a tougher fish, and they manage.

MG: Where do you see fishermen going from here? Is there any hope?

SN: We need more fishermen. The whole country needs more fishermen. I look down South. There's still tons and tons of shrimp boats [inaudible]. If you look at the AIS [Automatic identification system] tracking – do you know what that is?

MG: Can you say it for the tape?

SN: AIS tracking. That's tracking that tracks all the boats. Mostly all New England boats are on it. You can [inaudible]. So once you go down South, they don't have it down there; it isn't mandatory. So the boats – there are so many of them – you can go anyplace. Let me show it to you.

MG: It sounds like regulations are much looser down South.

SN: Down South, I think it's more like the Wild West. You got good people and bad people. It depends. I think most of the bad people are gone. Let me show you so you can get a better idea what I'm talking about.

MG: Looking back, knowing what you know now, would you still have become a fisherman?

SN: The only reason I would do it back it again, to tell the people that have the rights facts in fishing. What people know about fishing is all wrong. Scientists are good people. Most of the people are great people. I got a lot of friends that I met. They agree with fisher – like all these observers, they basically agree that what's going on is wrong. They're just doing it to put their time in. When you go to school, you need your diploma. That's all these people would get out of it. Let me see if I can find this stupid thing.

MG: Is there anything you would have done differently? Anything else?

SN: You know what I would have liked to have been? I would like to have been educated to become a talker. I admire people who get up to talk. I'm not a good talker. Communicate with people and get the point out there. You got some of these people, they're really talking – to get the point across, what's really happening in fishing, and the way it should be, you need somebody that's good at that, which I'm not.

MG: I think you're a good talker.

SN: I'm trying to find this site for you. Everything I have is all about fishing – everything.

MG: What advice would you give someone who's getting into fishing today?

SN: How to become a good fisherman? I would say, "Think about it twice if you want to be a fisherman. Think about [how] people are going to call you a crook. Learn through your mistakes." If I ever did damage to my net, I always wanted to know where I did it. Some people don't care. I don't want to make the same mistake twice.

MG: I want to ask you a little bit about your family life. When did you meet your wife?

SN: Well, it's funny. This is my second wife. My first wife, she was an out-of-town person. It's hard to be married to a fisherman. It really, really is. Even my [wife] hates it now because you can't really make plans. Like my father – I played a lot of sports – never went to them, always busy. Weddings, never did that. Always on the go. Let me see. This is showing all the boats. This is the Gulf of Maine. This is still the Gulf of Maine.

MG: Which website is this?

SN: This is AIS Marine Traffic.

MG: Neat.

SN: Now you go Southern New England, look at the difference from boats here than down here ... but it goes down. Then, probably half the country [inaudible]. When you go down South, they don't have it. These guys never put nothing in. You can track a boat, where he goes, how he fishes, and everything. There's quite a lot of information out there, how to become a good fisherman, where people go. I look at where some of the – there's one boat in Gloucester. I think he made four million dollars last year. He [inaudible]. He's just fishing off Cape Cod. He goes to one little spot every time, and that's it. But he puts his time in. You have to put your time in.

MG: So, how does he get away with that?

SN: Buys a lot of quota. He buys fish. He ain't using his quota because he doesn't have enough. You keep on buying. That's another thing, too, that I really don't like. All these people that knew this, that this was happening, they fished hard, and they got quota. Now they're just sitting back and making big money without even fishing, which I don't like personally. I would say this is crazy.

MG: Earlier you mentioned your trip to Germany and Iceland.

SN: Yes. I went to Europe.

MG: How are fisheries being managed over there?

SN: I think they have the same problem now, as I'm reading. No one really believes in fishermen. Over there, they're fishing for so long now. They don't have the fish that we have over here. Everything is cut. Their fishing is cut down, but I think their government supports them more than our government. I don't think U.S. fishermen get that much support; I really don't. Like I say, get out of fishing because we want to import technology [inaudible], and that's what really happened. No one can tell me anything different. That has to change because we don't have any more fishermen left.

MG: I started to ask about your family life. When did you marry your current wife?

SN: The first time I got married – '69, I got married the first time.

MG: How old were you then?

SN: I think I was twenty-nine when I got married. To me, marriage should be a five-year thing because that's when you find you really know the true people. Otherwise, you try to make it go and whatever. Five to seven years, and it should be renewable because that's when you really know the person. You really don't know the person until you live with them for a while, you see what's going on. My first wife, she was a nice person and all, but she didn't fit in because I was never around — same thing with my second wife. I have three kids with my first wife, and one with my second wife. But she was married before, too. It's taking care of the kids and all that.

It's tough for a woman. Basically, like my mother used to say, you have to marry your own kind. Yet, in my family, none of us married another Italian. Every one of us was different. That's really rare in Gloucester. You see the same people. It's true. It's true.

MG: Tell me about your children. Then we can wrap up.

SN: My oldest, he's a lawyer in Boston. He's a medical lawyer, I think. Then my second one – I had two boys; they're a year apart. They both went to school. They got good educations. They got good jobs and all that. My wife took off with [my daughter] a long time ago. She ran away with her, down to the islands.

MG: Which islands?

SN: The Virgin Islands. I'm probably closer to my daughter. She came back, and everything's all set now. After you go through a divorce, you're bitter and all that, but then it changes. Time cures all. My son now, with my last wife, he just graduated a couple years ago from UMASS [University of Massachusetts], but he doesn't know what he wants to do. He's a carpenter now. He's working for his brother in law in the business. My wife had her two sons. One of them, he's like my son. He's been running the boat. I gave him half the boat because if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have been there. My other kids, they really don't seem to mind about it.

MG: How much are you fishing these days?

SN: Today? I fished this project starting July 1st because I was involved in trying to get the whiting opened, and I wanted to see how it went. I think it went well. In fact, I thanked the guy because if it wasn't for him, we couldn't have done it. I don't know how the project works out; they go through the numbers and all that. He says it was good that it worked out, but he's got to review it. I don't think he knows that much about fish anyway. He depends on the other people. But he gave fishermen a chance. He gave me the chance to prove my point. I've been trying to do this since 2012. Now it's 2019, and we did it. So let's see what happens next year. I'm getting out of the business. But I won't get out of the business because I'm here to support the city of Gloucester, the fishermen of the United States, to keep it going. We need fish. That's all we do, feed people. That's it. We're not doing anything wrong. That's how I feel about it.

MG: Is there anything I forgot to ask you? Any stories you'd like to share?

SN: I've got tons of stories. Just go look. Google me. Sam Novello or Rocky Novello. I'm in the letter to the government about what they did.

MG: What do you mean?

SN: You follow Fishery Nation? Probably not.

MG: Yes, that's where I saw a lot of your letters.

SN: Let me see. I think there was a thing with letters here. I don't know where it is.

MG: I think I saw those.

SN: Okay, you've seen them then. I just feel that fishermen are getting screwed, fishing communities. There's got to be more. It can't end like this. What can I tell you?

MG: Is there anything else before I turn off the recorder?

SN: No, I can't think of anything unless you could come up with something.

MG: If you do think of something, I will be back this way quite a bit, and I can come by to add more to the record.

SN: Okay.

MG: Well, I want to thank you for your time today. This was a lot of fun. I'm so glad we were able to get together.

SN: Yes, okay.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 10/7/2019
Reviewed by Salvatore Novello 10/16/2019
Reviewed by Molly Graham 11/25/2019