

Interview with Danny Koch

Narrator: Danny Koch

Interviewer: Nancy Solomon

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Project Name: Long Island Traditions

Project Description: Folklorist Nancy Solomon has documented the maritime culture of Long Island through these interviews spanning the years 1987 – 2016. The collection includes baymen, fishermen, boat builders and other maritime tradition bearers.

Principal Investigators: Nancy Solomon

Transcript Team: National Capital Contracting

Abstract: On June 3, 1987, Nancy Solomon interviewed Danny Koch as part of the *Long Island Traditions* oral history project. Danny is a lifelong bayman who has been working the bay area for his entire life, just like his father, uncle, and grandfathers before him. Danny explains the process of setting traps and the varying number of killey he catches each day, depending on the tides and other factors. He mentions that the bay he fishes in is not a particularly productive fishing area. Nevertheless, Danny continues to work alone, setting traps and fishing on his own garvey boats. Danny takes pride in making his own traps, using a single funnel killey trap design similar to the one his grandfather used. He finds store-bought traps less satisfactory. He discusses the materials he uses, such as plywood, oak, and fiberglass, to construct his garvey boats, which he has been building since the age of 16. Danny appreciates the curved shape and high bows of garveys, emphasizing their importance in navigating the bay. In addition to his fishing endeavors, Danny assists other baymen who encounter difficulties on the water, while preferring to leave city dwellers to their own devices. He mentions the presence of around twenty killey trappers in the area and reveals that he sells his catch to Causeway Bait and Tackle, as well as other types of bait such as skimmer clams, crabs, oysters, mussels, and eels. Throughout the interview, Danny shares anecdotes about his experiences, including being bitten by lobsters, blue-claw crabs, and horseshoe crabs. He recalls various mishaps and adventures working alongside his brother, Lenny Koch, and mentions the circumstances under which he acquired his business. Danny's siblings are not involved in fishing, with two of them running a deli instead. Danny reflects on the changes he has witnessed in the fishing industry over the years, including a decrease in the number of commercial fishermen in the area. He reminisces about a time when the bay was more visible and used to be meadowland. He also mentions his family's history, with his grandfather being involved in rum-running and prospering during the Great Depression. The interview concludes with Danny discussing his interactions with other baymen, many of whom are relatives, and his disinterest in duck hunting, a sentiment shared by his brother Lenny.

Nancy Solomon: – doing this.

Danny Koch: I've been doing this all my life, since I was a kid with my uncles, my father, grandfathers. I catch little fish like this with big shells on the bottom and the killeys goes scampering right across there, you got to find your best place.

NS: Are you looking for horseshoe shells or just any kind?

DK: Do you see the little white shells there?

NS: Yeah, clam shells.

DK: You'll see the killeys and go scoop them right up. [inaudible]

NS: Where do you get your horseshoe crab from?

DK: I catch them on my dragger. I can pick them up and they will come across the mud. You can see them [inaudible]

NS: [laughter]

DK: You can get a load of [inaudible] of these grasses and beaches and stuff. As you see later on, it's a matter of high tide. You'll see them all over the place. I've always picked up [inaudible]. My dog gets a lot of them. I get some, pick some up too.

NS: [laughter] Yeah.

DK: We got five the last time.

NS: Sorry.

DK: [We?] get five and I got a hundred. We get a little better at it. [laughter]

NS: You said a hundred's a good catch though, right?

DK: Yes.

NS: Have you ever put them out right at the edge of the bank?

DK: Yeah.

NS: What happens if you do that?

DK: When you catch them only at certain times. [inaudible] You just keep [inaudible] like these creeks here. There're creeks like this that have holes in the [inaudible] got holes of water in certain spots out in the bay. That's what I have been catching for the last two weeks. But the

tides are wrong. The fishes are [inaudible] right now where everything is so late, probably only good for a few more days. [Till?] the tide gets a little later. Now you have to try to catch them this way. This is the hard way. The other way, you don't get out of the boat.

NS: [laughter]

DK: So, you got to get out of the boat to put traps.

NS: How many traps do you put out?

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

NS: [inaudible] What were good places?

DK: Yeah. It takes a long time to know where they are and where they go and hang out. [inaudible]

NS: Did you learn a lot of that from your dad and grandfather?

DK: Yeah. My dad, my grandfather, my uncles, they're all in [baymen?] [inaudible] in the ocean, fishing [inaudible] a few generations.

NS: How long has your family been out here?

DK: They were [inaudible] years in this place. There was nothing here but grass and cocktails, clamshell, not like what you have now.

NS: [laughter]

DK: [If you can?] believe it.

NS: Do you know when the first Koches came here?

DK: Early 1900s.

NS: Do you know where they originally came from?

DK: Some of them are from New Jersey.

NS: No, I meant before the United States.

DK: Most of [them?] were born in the United States.

NS: [laughter]

DK: [It's not?] too great around here.

NS: How can you tell?

DK: You usually see a few more killeys floating around, stuff like that. I think this is as good a place as any to go try. Let's go down here. Plenty of time. [It's still?] good to try again.
[inaudible]

NS: Do you make your own traps?

DK: Yes.

NS: Ever have trouble finding them again?

DK: Once in a while, not too often.

NS: Does anybody ever take them?

DK: Once in a while.

NS: This is pretty much where you've always been putting your traps?

DK: I placed them all over the whole bay. This place is great to stay [inaudible]. A lot better on [inaudible]. [Get out of there?]

NS: How long do you usually leave the traps out for?

DK: [inaudible]

NS: A couple of days?

DK: A few hours.

NS: Really? That's pretty fast.

DK: Yes.

NS: [Digging?] for shells?

DK: [inaudible] [One over there? ...Come up again after a while?] [inaudible] [Want to?] walk down there?

NS: Sure. [laughter] I got my boots on. You usually do this alone?

DK: Yes. [inaudible]

NS: Do you ever go out on your dragger alone?

DK: No.

NS: Must be nice for a change of pace.

DK: Definitely. When I come back, [inaudible] right through the top of the water. [inaudible]

NS: What other kinds of things do you do when you're not out on the dragger?

DK: I work on a [inaudible] motion picture movie.

NS: Oh, yeah.

DK: Making motion picture movies [doing rigging?] stuff like that.

NS: So, just like working on a boat?

DK: Well, the stuff that I do I like [inaudible] I don't want to be on it, I don't even bother, because I don't really need it. I keep busy enough on my own, but it's a nice change of pace. [laughter] [inaudible]

NS: Have you ever worked in an office?

DK: Not me.

NS: How come?

DK: I can't stay in an office for an hour.

NS: [laughter] Have you ever tried it?

DK: No. But I have seen enough people in an office to know that I would never want to be in one.

NS: You've been fishing pretty much all your life?

DK: Yes. I [wouldn't want to be?] any other place.

NS: What kind of trap is that considered?

DK: killey trap.

NS: I know. Is it like a single funnel or...?

DK: Yes, single funnel trap.

NS: Why do you use the single funnel?

DK: We've made the double funnel ones. [inaudible] I don't know. I think these ones work the best. A [bunch?] of junk gets caught in the funnels, killeys don't get out so easily. [They?] have plenty of time to [inaudible]. No sense in changing something that works good.

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

DK: Yeah. It's all a little [inaudible]. All commercial guys, [they all look like that?] I don't. Hey, get out of here!

NS: What about some of those store-made ones? Are they any good?

DK: See them?

NS: Yeah.

DK: That's what you [shouldn't?] see when you're on a [inaudible].

NS: How come?

DK: [inaudible] double check.

NS: What is it made out of?

DK: What's that?

NS: The pot?

DK: Just a couple of pieces 1 x 2 wood and wire.

NS: What kind of wood?

DK: Just regular.

NS: Any kinds of wood work better than others?

DK: Eh, not really [inaudible]. That stuff is cheap [inaudible] [and it's not?] in the water that long. Usually, the wire rusts out before any of the rest of it goes. [inaudible].

NS: You have to make a new batch every year?

DK: Almost [inaudible] years old. Some of them are brand new, some of them I just made, half of them are old and half of them are new.

NS: Did you build that boat that we were on?

DK: Yeah, I built a bunch of them.

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

DK: I was about sixteen, seventeen. There are a bunch of them around here look just like that.

NS: I know.

DK: There's that one that we passed, the black one, going in there. I made that one there. The other one down the creek that Joey has, I made that one. The other one over on Freeport that looks like [marks?] a little higher down [inaudible], I built about a half a dozen of them.

NS: Wow, that is a lot of boats.

DK: Not really.

NS: Are they all Garveys?

DK: Yes. All twenty-footer, sixteen-footer, seventeen-footer, a nineteen-footer, one of these sizes. This is a little sixteen-footer.

NS: It seems like everyone I've met has built a Garvey.

DK: You can build Garvey. You can build nice Garveys.

NS: What is the difference?

DK: [inaudible]. The way they drive and they ride.

NS: Is it pretty much, like, if there's just a little curve, is that considered a good Garvey?

DK: Yes, a lot of curves [inaudible].

NS: How come?

DK: Because they ride higher, they ride drier. They carry more clams and not wet. They don't bounce when they go across the water. They drive nice and straight. [inaudible] build on the boat. Right, Joan?

Female Speaker: Well, I only saw you build one. That was *Little John*. That was some operation to bend all those straight [pieces and everything?].

DK: What about [the hatch?]? You didn't see me build [the hatch]??

FS: I don't think so.

NS: The huts?

DK: The hatch [inaudible]. He's got a twenty-footer I made for him.

NS: Wow. How come you make them so big?

DK: My cousin had a twenty-four-footer. Right [inaudible].

NS: That one?

DK: No, that's about a [twenty-four-footer?], that one on the side, but the [bow?] I think on mine is twice as high as that.

NS: How come?

DK: Because when you load them down full of clams, you need something – when it's rough out, you something to bust in front of the waves, or else the waves roll right in front of the boat and they sink you.

NS: Have you seen guys you know have been sunk in their Garveys?

DK: Yes, [inaudible] been sunk. I sunk a few boats myself catching on its weight. [laughter]

NS: You got to be careful how ambitious you're going to get. What do you make them out of?

DK: Plywood, oak, and fiberglass.

NS: Is that what you've always made them out of?

DK: Mm-hm.

NS: Do you know what they used to make them out of?

DK: Yeah, cedar, pine. They didn't have plywood back then.

NS: Have you ever tried making one out of that?

DK: Yeah, I made one. They don't last like these boats here. These boats last forever with the plywood and the fiberglass. They're tough, they're made for abuse, durability. The pine boats, the plank boats, they don't stay together too good. [I ripped mine apart?] [inaudible].

NS: Are there ribbed –

DK: [inaudible] something?

NS: Have you built a gunning boat?

DK: No.

NS: How come?

DK: I haven't got around to it. I can make one of these. Make one [in?] a couple of days.

NS: How long does it take to build a Garvey?

DK: A couple of weeks. Start to finish.

NS: When you build, do you have a sketch or anything, and you just...

DK: Basically.

NS: Are the ribs also made out of plywood?

DK: No.

NS: The top [part?]?

DK: More plywood with oak [frames?] go around the plywood.

NS: I meant the top part of the...

DK: It's all fiberglass around. You could take the wood out of the boat [inaudible] fiberglass [inaudible] fiberglass inside and out. It can last forever.

NS: Did you ever see people get stuck out there?

DK: All the time.

NS: Do you help each other when they...

DK: Baymen do, yes. [Some of these wingnuts?] out in the bay [inaudible], you see those guys are broke down, you just let them drift. If you see one of your own type of guys out there, you go pick them up. So most of them guys, when they see you broke down, they just wave to you, "Bye." That's what I do to them now. "See you later."

NS: [laughter] I guess you got to really know the tides.

DK: I know a lot of people around the bay, too, so there's always one of us cutting around with you. I've shoved – from where we were today – I've took that stick and shoved my boat all the way home from there like a couple of times.

NS: When the tide's too low?

DK: No, because the motor broke down when I was out in the middle of the bay.

NS: Oh, God. How many other people are catching killeys?

DK: Probably at least 50 on Long Island, maybe more.

NS: No, I mean around here?

DK: Probably twenty guys around here.

NS: When you first started, how much would you catch?

DK: So, it depends if somebody was there before you or not. But you can always go catch fifty quarts on the trap.

NS: These days about how much do you catch?

DK: I'm still catching about fifty but sometimes you can catch a hundred a lot of times. You can catch all you want but it gets thinned out now.

NS: Are the sports fishermen also catching killeys or is it still mostly baymen?

DK: Yeah, part-time. There are a lot of guys like that, part-time, and have other jobs. They'll go out and catch a few killeys.

NS: Do they sell them or...

DK: Yeah, they try to. [We?] may be selling them for \$3, \$2.50 [inaudible]. Then they may be selling them for \$2.

NS: Who do you sell your killeys to?

DK: A few different people, Causeway Bait and Tackle and some other guys like that.

NS: These guys you've known for a long time?

DK: Yeah. I also sell them clams and stuff, too. Bait skimmer clams.

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

DK: Clams, we catch crabs, mussels, oysters, a few of them.

NS: Really?

DK: killeys, crabs, eels.

NS: Are these green crabs?

DK: Green crabs and blue-clawed crabs. [Spearing?]

NS: Did you ever get nabbed by a blue-claw crab?

DK: [inaudible] lobsters too. [laughter]

FS: Tell her about [horsefootin?], Dan.

DK: What?

FS: Tell her about horsefootin, that's fun.

NS: What happened?

DK: We'll probably see some of them later when we go back out down to the bay.

Lenny Koch: You know horseshoe crabs that are on the bank [inaudible] at the beach?

NS: Yes, when they're mating. [laughter]

FS: You go out and catch them all. But usually when it's really hot, you go and get soaking wet, you chase them down.

NS: [laughter]
[Crosstalk]

DK: Scott's beach...

FS: You have to pull apart the male from the female –

NS: I know. I saw Cory do that. But what a way to go. [laughter]

FS: They all have smiles on their faces.

NS: Not right after they pull them apart. [laughter] Do you remember one time when one grabbed a hold of you, it wouldn't let go?

DK: Yeah, [I break off the claw?] pull the claw apart.

NS: Really? Is that hard to do?

DK: You don't panic without yelling. I got to snap it off and pull it off.

NS: [laughter]

FS: I got bit twice yesterday.

LK: You got to shake it off and you jump around or it tears your finger off.

NS: Yeah. [laughter]

LK: It does. It'll really try to tear off your finger. They ripped it off.

DK: If you could just take a claw off [inaudible].

LK: The little squiggly crabs, that little spider ones, them [inaudible] are quick and they got a good bite. You got –

DK: I got bit by a crab yesterday out there. I was picking through the [inaudible] with my hand. The hairy one grabbed on the side of the finger.

NS: Oh, God.

DK: Right, Joan?

FS: I got one right here on my glove.

DK: Where?

NS: Did you have gloves on or...

DK: No.

FS: [He didn't?] One also got me on the tip of my boot. Went right through the boot and on my toe.

[Crosstalk]

FS: [Then it's?] hanging on it, shaking your foot –

LK: I had a five-pound lobster just grab me this finger –

DK: Every time [inaudible] have a hanger on the bottom of the [inaudible].

NS: When you first began, as you remember, some of the stupid things that happen to everyone?

DK: I'm sure I did so many stupid things that happen, I couldn't remember half of them.

[laughter]

LK: We don't want to remember them. [laughter]

NS: Did you two learn together or you...?

LK: No, we both do things together and work differently doing things too.

DK: Well, I feel sorry for him, so I try to help him out. [laughter]

FS: That's what brothers are for though.

DK: He's really tough [guy?] to get to come around. [laughter]

NS: I know you were working in some other places besides here. You've always been around here?

DK: He lives here. He used to work in a sewage plant and a garbage truck. [laughter]

NS: I did not know that. [laughter]

LK: No, I never worked with sewage. [laughter]

DK: You got to get away from them shit jobs. [laughter]

LK: Here comes this evening's [bullshit?] stories. [laughter].

NS: I just remember you said you work in the Hamptons, Florida.

LK: That was working on the yacht.

[crosstalk]

LK: That was about as funny as a one-legged man doing a fast dance. [laughter]

NS: Right. You got it.

NS: How about you, Dan, have you always been running this company or...?

DK: Sure. I'm the president.

NS: How'd you get to be president?

LK: He elected himself.

DK: I elected myself.

NS: How many kids are there in your family?

DK: Twenty-four.

LK: Twenty-four.

NS: Come on. [laughter]

LK: There's twenty-one, I'd say there's twenty-four.

NS: No. Your parents, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

FS: Not counting illegitimate children.

DK: How many they want to own up to, you mean? Not him. [laughter]

My other brother and my sisters, there's really four. But there's three, because they don't count him. He's adopted. [laughter] [inaudible] [laughter]

[Crosstalking]

NS: Are the others in this business or no?

LK: No. My sister used to work on a [inaudible], she was a maid. But now she owns deli. My other brothers own the deli also. They're partners there.

NS: Are they still around here?

LK: Yeah. They're all from Baldwin Harbor.

NS: What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you when you've been out on the dragger on the bay?

LK: How about bass fishing? Washish up on the beach.

DK: Yeah, the breaking waves washed up on the beach. [inaudible].

NS: Is this right in the inlet?

DK: Yes, right on the ocean, right in front of the beach. We were catching stripers, [and we caught some nets on the?] propeller. Big waves come in and break in the boat and washed us right on the beach.

NS: Oh, my God.

DK: He had to come down and hit the truck and crank the boat up on the beach and bring it

home on a four-wheeled drive truck. We've done that twice.

LK: Yeah. I washed up twice too, but I was able to get out.

DK: Yeah, I get off most of the time. [inaudible].

LK: Once, it knocked me right out.

DK: But when the surf is real big, it's better off just pushing the boat all the way out on the beach than coming down with the truck because as the tide goes out, there ain't no water around the boat, so the high tide just gets the boat up there all the way. Then when the tide goes down, you take the boat and you come back about few hours later with the truck and trailer, just crank it right on and take off across the beach with it.

NS: Have you ever run out of gas?

DK: Where, on the ocean?

NS: Yes.

DK: No.

DK: There ain't no place –

LK: Can't get out of gas out there.

NS: Yeah, I was just wondering.

LK: I have a couple of times where I come in with my killey boat, where I come in with a load of stuff on there, and I come to the end, and I [inaudible] once. That ain't too bad. [You can drive home from there?] You don't want to be out in the ocean [inaudible] thirty miles running out of gas.

FS: We once were on the ocean at night and someone had tried to steal the propeller. But we must've stopped them before they got it completely off. We're out about half a mile off the beach, and it was like 11:00 p.m. Propeller fell off. It was dark. I don't know. It was dark. So, we had to swim, and it was all the electric jellyfish were in the water.

NS: Oh, my man.

FS: I was like, a half mile is a long swim. We were wearing clothes. I was pretty scared. It's all over your face and neck and everything. Danny has a leg that gets tired, so I had give him the cross-chest carry all the way in. [laughter]

NS: Oh, Christ, you must be some swimmer.

FS: Lifeguard. I used to be a lifeguard.

DK: She floats the highest in the pool. [laughter] See the pontoons she's got there?

FS: One time I'm gill netting. He used to have this guy [Brooklyn Joe?] work with him on his [Mako?]. I used to work with Danny on his [Mako?]. It was so rough. Me and Joey created mutiny. We refused to work.

LK: On both boats at the same time.

FS: On both boats. I wasn't even talking to Joey. It was so rough. They go right into where people were swimming. Right in before the breakers, that's where they have the anchor, you have to go in and grab the anchor, and pull it out. So, if it's really rough, he's hanging on to the engine. There's nothing to hang on to. You get pounded boy, the [world?] hits you. You get ribs broken and everything.

LK: Look what happened to me that day, right?

FS: Well, that made me and Joey refused to work, me and Joey went on his boat, and he went with Danny. He couldn't get the stuff. You got pounded all over the place.

LK: Yes, I did [inaudible].

NS: I have been hearing a lot about how the sportsmen have really hurt the business around here. What do you think of that?

LK: Well, in a way, they have hurt it. They create a lot of problems for us. They want this protected. Certain things like bass. They don't know what it's like working on the water, have no idea what your livelihood or working on the water is all about. They have no idea at all. They just want to legislate this and legislate that. It's a lot of crap because they don't know what they're talking about in the first place. If you ask somebody who works on the water, we see what's going on.

NS: Do you think there are some things the fisherman will be able to do to change it?

LK: I was trying. But with such a little voice, it's like something ridiculous like 3-1/2 million to about 10,000. The odds are a little bit stacked against you. It's like trying to find a needle in the haystack, more or less. It's ridiculous. You don't really get too much voice out of it.

NS: Then the ones who pretty much have the clout with the local people and politicians.

LK: Yeah. Sure. Look at the battle on tuna club presses. They get two or three sentences just because they were big ones after striking up the bass issue last year.

FS: Oh, really? That's where my father belongs. [laughter]

LK: Yeah. Look at this guy Owen Johnson. [laughter] Senator Owen Johnson.

NS: How many commercial fishermen used to be involved in the harbor?

LK: Here, at one time, I guess maybe 25 years ago right on this canal, between little boats and offshore boats, probably about 50 to 60 people.

NS: These were all people whose families were here?

LK: Old families, yes.

NS: Now you're the only one?

LK: All residents of the area of Baldwin Harbor. They all lived here. Or they lived right here in Freeport Harbor somewhere. We're all local people.

NS: That's good.

LK: [They chased everybody out?]

DK: Who did?

LK: Everybody. With whack-job neighbors we got around here now. The condo over here. That's ridiculous to crap like this. This used to be meadows years ago. Now, we're getting developed by ISOs all over the place. There are no more rolling meadows or nothing like that.

DK: You used to be able to see clear to the ocean from here.

LK: Yes. Well, I remember when, back in the days of old Grandpa Koch, [laughter] he used to have a horse and buggy to bring their boat down to the beach and everything, right? Bring him down behind the [inaudible] where the school is now. All the way down to the end of the bay. Then they'd sail across the bay, and they throw in sail and stuff like that.

FS: Did you guys have [rum runners?] too?

LK: Yeah, they were [rum?] runners. All of them were. How do you think all our families [inaudible] –

NS: Do you ever had any stories about them?

LK: Oh, Christ, it was like [inaudible]

DK: Also rich. [laughter]

NS: Do you know if the Depression really affected things around here?

LK: It sure did. They all started making money with the Depression down, running all that

hooch and shit. Every one of our uncles have thought we're millionaires. We've been away for a long time. Yes.

NS: [laughter]

LK: Some of the wealthiest people around this part. The funny part is now they're dying off and they're all leaving the money to charity and shit.

NS: Oh, God.

FS: I'm a charity.

LK: Look at [inaudible], right Joan? That guy had more money than the treasury, real estate, everything else.

NS: Have you ever thought about working in something other than fishing?

LK: No.

DK: He's going to get a job in the zoo one day. [laughter]

FS: Who's going to get down there?

[Crosstalk]

FS: Danny worked in the [union?] as a [inaudible] in motion pictures.

LK: He used to work with Frank Sinatra, right?

FS: John Belushi.

LK: Yep.

NS: Belushi?

FS: Yes, he did *Neighbors* with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi.

DK: [inaudible]

NS: You going to come sit down again? Have you done eel trapping and stuff?

DK: Yes. I showed Cory how to build all those eel traps.

NS: Really?

DK: Yes. As a matter of fact, all the traps, I gave it to him. My uncle Elwood does [inaudible]

on the eels [inaudible]. The ultimate trap, killey trap. They don't make them like that, it takes too much time.

NS: How are they made?

DK: All handmade nylon funnels, stuff like that. It takes a lot of time to make them, but they catch a lot better.

NS: How long does it take to make the trap?

DK: It takes a few hours at least. A trap like that, I may take half of the day to make each trap.

NS: You spent most of your winter making new traps?

DK: Yes. We had a lot of other stuff to do. The killey traps are easier, I think. You can make a whole [gear?] done in a couple of days with the modern tools that I have. I got all kinds of [inaudible] [sheers?]. I have staple guns, all pneumatic tools. One, two, three [instead of?] sitting there with the hammer and the nails. [inaudible]

NS: I noticed that boat had a lot of really old nails in there.

DK: Which boat?

NS: Your Garvey?

DK: That one, there's no nails there. [inaudible] All fiberglass closes to the [inaudible] hung up on a couple of blocks. The boat [inaudible] railing ripped to the pieces [inaudible]. I was going to take all that out [inaudible] put that other little Garvey in the water [inaudible]. I'll take this one out. I'll put all new rails and stuff on it and I'll paint it up. Right, [inaudible]?

LK: Yep.

NS: For the eel traps, how long did those to make?

DK: It depends how well you work on them and how fast you go ahead. You can build a couple of eel pots in a day. [A week?] start to finish.

NS: Does it cost a lot to make these things?

DK: It costs about, I don't know, making eel pots probably costs about \$15 to \$20 to build them.

NS: For the killeys, you use a single funnel. What about for the eel traps?

DK: Two funnels. And it's a lot more [lucrative?] pot eel trap than killey trap. killey trap is simple to make. The eel pot is three times more involved than a killey trap. You can make a hundred killey pots but you'll probably only make ten eel pots.

NS: Is it because of the funnels?

DK: Yes, they have to [inaudible] too much time [inaudible] wood [lathe?] and stuff, and doors to make on the trap. Eel trap has two funnels and two doors. But a killey trap only has one of that, and a killey pot is half the size.

NS: Your eel traps, are they the same kind as Cory's or...

DK: I gave him most of them. My uncle sold him the rest of them. Then he built a few himself. He just learned how to make them. He don't make them quite as nice, but they're doing a pretty good job. Better than most people.

NS: How long did it take you to learn to make a killey trap?

DK: My uncle showed me. So, I learned –

NS: What is your uncle's name?

DK: Elwood Verity. He died last year. He had a boating accident out in the bay. We found him drowned out there about a hundred feet from his Garvey. Last summer. Yeah, that was something else.

NS: How old is he?

DK: He's 42. He was out pulling his eel pots. They found him about a hundred feet from his boat, facedown, in the heavy-duty thunderstorm, electric storm out there. The next day we found him with the Coast Guard and the police. We looked all the clam diggers and all of that. We had search up all night long. We looked at the next morning all day. The next morning, we found him. [inaudible] real high grasp. We found the boat and everything up. Then we found him lying on the water facedown about a hundred feet from the boat.

NS: That's really [inaudible].

DK: Yes, it's quite a shock too. The constables and the police waited around there all night long with us, the Coast Guard. At least we had some help.

NS: Did many baymen die?

DK: Quite a few of them. I had three friends I lost [this?] summer out in the bay alone. I had a friend, Little John, he had a boat accident. Some guy hit a pole or something out in the bay there. [inaudible] A propeller hit him or something and cut his whole guts out and his arms also. He just had a baby who was four months old. He's just married about a year now. [inaudible] One of my best friends. I just had built a Garvey for him the year before that. Right on the dock here, same fellow. That's the Garvey. The black one there we're seeing going in. That was the boat. Patterson was another good friend, so his wife gave him the boat. She didn't want it no

more. Here, we had a rough summer last summer. Paul [inaudible] his wife died. [Hervey's?] wife died. Ellwood [inaudible] all of them, quick. Seemed like all I was doing was going to funerals.

NS: Really gutsy to keep at it when you hear things like that.

DK: [inaudible] started out in the bay [inaudible] working.

NS: The only thing they have [inaudible] die [inaudible] to be out in the ocean.

DK: [inaudible] right out on a boat when I am fishing. A couple of guys [kept?] going all the time. They're going, some of them fish by themselves. You go out there and you see the boat keep going [inaudible]. One guy had a heart attack at the wheel, and the boat was coming. [inaudible] had to jump in the boat and get him a helicopter coming out and take you off the boat. It's been quite a few things. A couple of guys said they've seen dead bodies and other people [watched?] that.

NS: People died young in this [inaudible]?

DK: People who died in accidents. There are other people who lived pretty long. Mostly old fishermen around here are all seventy-five, eighty now. The oldest died on the sea. I think he was about eighty-five. The only reason why he died is because they did an operation on his back and after another one on the stomach and he wasn't ready for it. [inaudible] cooking along. The other old guy was out, his brother, he's 76, he still opens clams. The other guy that was out the dock, [Charley?], he's 84, [Charley Combs?]. He comes down. He's about the same age, too.

NS: Do you know pretty most of the baymen around here?

DK: Yeah, I know pretty much all of them.

NS: Seems like a pretty young group.

LK: Time's change. It's the old people and then all of sudden their kids. Then all of sudden, their kids. It's been a long line.

NS: Are any of your cousins in this?

LK: A whole bunch of them.

DK: A lot [inaudible] fishing for the clams was [inaudible].

NS: It's pretty amazing. Did you ever go duck hunting?

DK: Yes. If there is enough time in the bay, fishing, and stuff like that [inaudible] duck hunt freezing my ass off shooting some stupid duck.

NS: [laughter] You do it anyway?

DK: Yeah.

NS: How about you? Do you ever go duck hunting?

LK: I used to. I haven't been hunting for a few years now. No excitement [in it?] anymore.

FS: Plus, what do you do with the ducks?

LK: When I had the [bay house?] I don't eat the ducks anyways.

FS: Such a waste.

LK: No sense in shooting them if you're not going to eat them.

FS: Skeet is better.

LK: You go shoot some clay pigeons, stuff like that. [laughter] Something like that. I went last year. I went like one once or twice. I went out with Cory a couple of times. But since then, I don't have the bay house anymore, I don't really go out there that much. I used to stay out there the whole season. My friends would come out, why not?

NS: I think that's...

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Reviewed by Nicole Zador 7/2/2024