

## **Interview with Rick Verity**

**Narrator:** Rick Verity

**Interviewer:** Nancy Solomon

**Date:** May 11, 1998

**Location:** Lindenhurst, NY

**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 May 11, 1988, Nancy Solomon interviewed Rick Verity as part of the Long Island Traditions Oral History Collection. Rick is a skilled bayman who learned the art of eeling from his father, Elwood Verity. He shares his lifelong experiences as a bayman, inheriting his knowledge and skills from his father and uncle. He discusses his early introduction to clamming, the intricacies of eel trapping and combing, and the craftsmanship behind creating various types of traps and nets. Rick also provided insights into his hunting endeavors, including duck hunting, while expressing his continuous quest for improvement and adaptation. He shared anecdotes of challenging situations, such as falling out of his boat and witnessing amusing scenes involving inexperienced boaters. Throughout the interview, Rick displayed a deep connection to the bay, a passion for his craft, and a reverence for the lessons passed down through generations of his family.

Nancy Solomon: Who taught you? Your father?

Rick Verity: Yes, my father.

NS: That was Elwood?

RV: Yes.

NS: He had been doing work in the bay?

RV: Yes. His father before that, too, caught lobsters.

NS: What was your grandfather's name?

RV: William, Bill.

NS: Bill Verity?

RV: Yes. They called him Ike.

NS: How come?

RV: I don't know.

NS: That was just a name?

RV: Yes.

NS: Do you have a nickname?

RV: No.

NS: No?

RV: Rick.

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

RV: Yes, Rick Verity.

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

RV: I don't know. About three or four years old. I used to go out with my father when he was raking clams out around, I guess it was Patchogue.

NS: Breaking clams?

RV: Raking clams.

NS: Raking clams.

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

NS: How old...

RV: Since third grade. I started going out treading in fourth grade, something like that.

NS: Did your dad teach you that?

RV: No, I don't know. I just did it myself.

NS: How did you know where to...

RV: He showed me where to go. That's simple. Walk around and feel for the clams, that's all.

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

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

NS: Out here it's pretty soft?

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

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

RV: Yes.

NS: Where did your dad rake clams?

RV: I don't know. He hasn't raked for a good 15 years, he hasn't raked clams. He raked down in Patchogue, [down east?]. Then, years ago, he raked up in Baldwin in that until they closed all the west end of the bay down.

NS: When did that happen? Do you remember?

RV: I don't know, about 15, 20 years ago, it must be.

NS: So, about early 60s?

RV: Yes.

NS: When were you born?

RV: '68.

NS: So, it must have been early 70s.

RV: Yes.

NS: What were some...

RV: I was born in Blue Point. So, that had already been closed before I even was born. Then my family, we moved out east. Then my father started working out there. He wanted to get a house on the water, so we moved out here. Then he started eeling. Right out back here, this whole place used to be full of eels.

NS: Really?

RV: Not no more.

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

RV: No, comb.

NS: You combed for eels.

RV: Yes, comb eels – pot, trap them.

NS: Did you make your own traps? Did you learn?

RV: Yes, everybody's going to make their own traps.

NS: How do you make yours?

RV: Right there – just get wire, wood, hammer, nails, and start hammering.

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

RV: Around the yard.

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

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

NS: Any particular reason why?

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

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

RV: Yes, we use double funnels. Now, we're using the front nozzles. We've got two nozzles in the front and then the back nozzle got's – It's made out of webbing. [Not wire?].

NS: You call that a double funnel?

RV: That's a double nozzle.

NS: Double nozzle?

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

NS: Right, because that middle one in between.

RV: Yes, because first, the traps I used to make it based off the two nozzles. They had the front nozzle made out of webbing and then the back nozzle was webbing [too?]. But now instead of that, they make little wire ones on the sides, see that one, two, and then you get your three. They go in the first nozzle, eat the bait, and then they go through the back nozzle and they can't get back up because it's pulled tight. They slip in but they can't [find their way?] back out.

NS: How come you changed the way – going from...?

RV: To save time on building the traps.

NS: Does one work better?

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

NS: How long did it take you to make the first kind?

RV: I figure about a good ten hours into each trap.

NS: Wow.

RV: From scratch, from starting the trap. You got to take your webbing, cut out your webbing, sew that together, and then tack it all on the frame. It's a little tedious but it's got to be done.

NS: Is there a particular place you'll get your webbing from or...?

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

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

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

NS: Is that something you know how to do?

RV: Yes, I can make gillnets. We don't do any gillnetting anymore.

NS: How do you make a gillnet then?

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

NS: Is there a particular shape to a gillnet?

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

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

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

NS: Yes.

RV: [Looks like they finish this?].

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

RV: Make killey traps, all my spearing nets.

NS: What are spearing nets?

RV: Shiners and snapper bait like hook shiners.

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

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

NS: When's the season for that?

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

NS: But when do you go for shiners?

RV: I don't know, mainly in the spring, early summer.

NS: Is that because that's when most people are catching [inaudible]?

RV: Well, that's the only time I can really sell them. That's when the bait and tackle shops will take them. But then we catch them around Christmas time a little bit, then we send them into the market, and people eat them.

NS: Oh, really?

RV: Yes.

NS: Is this Fulton market or...?

RV: Yes, Fulton [Street?].

NS: People don't eat them the rest of the time?

RV: No, not really, sometimes.

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

RV: Yes, for Christmas, for the Christmas market.

NS: Is that a traditional Christmas...?

RV: Yes, the Italians eat it.

NS: Really?

RV: Yes.

NS: I didn't know that.

RV: They all eat them around the holiday, right around Christmas or so, and on Jewish holidays, too, sometimes if there's any fish around to catch.

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

RV: Yes, you go to make all your [collars?]. I make everything.

NS: What's everything?

RV: Everything you see out there you see is hand-made. [inaudible]. Everything you have to build.

NS: Do you go eeling?

RV: Yes.

NS: So, there's killeys and eels and then shiners.

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

NS: [laughter] Do you go duck hunting?

RV: Yes.

NS: Yes, you do?

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

NS: Blue claws.

RV: – king crabs.

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

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

NS: How are they...?

RV: Give me a piece of paper. I'll draw out the traps for you.

NS: Why don't you tell me?

RV: Instead of trying to explain, I'll just draw a box and say what it looks like. [break in audio]

NS: How come you say that?

RV: This is what he [really likes?] to build the most. He sits down and [inaudible] with the long [belts?], pots, traps. Most of them.

NS: When do you build most of your traps?



RV: [Anywhere?] after Christmas. I'm still working with traps right now, my killey traps. Shouldn't be, but I am.

NS: [laughter] So, that's one of your killey traps?

RV: That's eels.

NS: That's your eel trap.

RV: Then here's my killey traps. These are single nozzle. [One?] funnel.

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

RV: It works, so we use it.

NS: Is that what your dad used?

RV: Yes.

NS: Is that your crab...

RV: Yes, this is a crab trap.

NS: Is that for a green crab or blue claw?

RV: Blue claws. [That's a two M on there, like that?].

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

RV: Square traps.

NS: Then for green crabs what would you use?

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

NS: [laughter] That's what Cory does, he uses half of an eel trap.

RV: Yes, I use eel traps. Here, I'll do an eel comb for you. Might as well.

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

RV: Yes. I [fix?] those too.

NS: What are those used for?

RV: Scungilli.

NS: Squid?

RV: Scungilli.

NS: Scungilli. What is scungilli?

RV: Snails. You see those big snails?

NS: Oh.

RV: Yes. That's what they're used for.

NS: Then there's a canary pot?

RV: Canary pot?

NS: You know what I am talking about?

RV: No.

NS: I mean, it might be something just your uncle uses. [break in audio] Get your eel combs from?

RV: Well, I buy wood and I [rot?] out the wood, get the aluminum heads made up from machinist, all drilled out and everything. Take wooden dowels, put them in the holes, drill them out, and then you pound ice picks and then soak them with [inaudible] for a while.

NS: How come you soak them?

RV: Makes the wood swell around the picks.

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

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

NS: That's what I was thinking of.

RV: Yes, that's a scungilli trap, pot.

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

RV: Yes.

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

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

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

RV: Yes.

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

RV: Me? No, but my uncle Jack builds his own boats.

NS: Where you get your boats from?

RV: I've had them all made, [for both of us?].

NS: By who?

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

NS: Where are they?

RV: Ollie's in Freeport and this [inaudible].

NS: Ollie Richter?

RV: Yes, I think he's in Freeport.

NS: Is he in any relation with [Mike Richter?]?

RV: I don't know.

NS: Does that ring a bell? Is Ollie use his formal name?

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

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

RV: Ron Pickerell.

NS: Where's he?

RV: On the north shore.

NS: Where?

RV: I guess it's Port Washington. [That's where you take 231?] straight across –

NS: Are both of these guys baymen?

RV: Yes.

NS: How come you never learned to build your own boat?

RV: I never had to, my father gave me enough. [laughter] I had three boats my father gave to me when he passed away.

NS: Wow. You still use them?

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

NS: Wow. What are they made of?

RV: [Oak wood, mahogany wood?].

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

RV: No.

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

RV: I never did.

NS: You don't use decoys?

RV: No, I got a whole bunch from my father. I got decoys – old ones, probably 60, 70 years old.

NS: Wow. He made decoys?

RV: No.

NS: No?

RV: My grandfather gave them to him.

NS: Wow.

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

NS: [laughter].

RV: One of my decoys.

NS: How come? Are they good decoys?

RV: Yes. I think Dick Abbott down in Baldwin Harbor made them.

NS: Wow.

RV: I think, I'm not sure. I think they got them there. They probably mentioned Dick.

NS: Oh, yes. He's kind of famous around town there. When you are first learning, where there a lot of mistakes that you made that...

RV: Yes. You make mistakes all your life.

NS: Is there any particular – ?

RV: You never get it right in this business. You never get it absolutely right. It's just about impossible.

NS: You find yourself making the same mistakes?

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

NS: Yes.

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

NS: What about your dad? Did he ever get it perfect? A lot of people –

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

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

RV: Yes.

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

RV: Everything.

NS: If you had to pick one thing, though?

RV: Everything. Spearfishing, eeling, killey-ing, everything. Everything's important. I like combing eels.

NS: How come?

RV: In the winter. I don't know, it's fun. If you catch some eels. If you're [bailing?] them into the boat, it's fun.

NS: [laughter]

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

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

RV: You got to know where to find them, first of all. [inaudible] catch them.

NS: Where do you find them?

RV: [All over?] I go as far as Patchogue right on [inaudible]. [Baldwin?], past that [inaudible].

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

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

NS: Do you go over there as well?

RV: Yes, you follow them. Chase them.

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

RV: Yes.

NS: Like what?

RV: You just know how to do it, I guess. That's the whole trick. [laughter]

NS: How do you do it?

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

NS: [laughter]

RV: This is connected to a cable. It goes up to the front of the boat. It's called the boom. There's the boat right here. You have to attach the boom right there. Then I stand right here. Then you're holding onto this right there. You just keep that in front of you in case you ever hit anything, it won't take your head off.

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

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

NS: Do you lift it up quickly?

RV: You bring it up pretty quick. You don't want to bring up too quick and knock the eel off the comb. But you'll feel them. When they get really big, the comb twists because the eel is squirming around in the comb.

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

RV: No.

NS: No?

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

NS: That flattens it out?

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

NS: Why?

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

NS: So, you go combing even in the winter?

RV: Yes.

NS: It must get pretty cold out there?

RV: Right after Christmas.

NS: What do you do to keep warm?

RV: Work.

NS: [laughter] You don't have a problem. Did you ever get iced in while you were combing? The bays get frozen over.

RV: My boats are all right here. That just means I can't leave here. We got iced in this winter.

NS: How long?

RV: How long was this ice? Four weeks?

Male Speaker: Yes, something like that.

RV: We had it for about four weeks, good. We were fine, broke our way out.

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

RV: I've fallen out of the boat.

NS: When was that?

RV: A couple of years ago. I was going down the bay. All of a sudden, the boat busted off the steering arm and the motor kicked to the side. The whole boat swung this way and the side went down like this. Before I knew it, I was like 40 feet away from the boat, and boat was going around in circles. [When I?] was in the water, gas tanks, everything floating around. My uncle Fred came flying out, he was right over there. I guess he's see it all happen, just about. He came flying over, pulled me out of the water. Then I had to jump in the boat. I was standing on the bow of Fred's boat. We were chasing my boat around. It was going pretty quick. So, I was going down the bay probably about 30 miles an hour when the boat broke, snapped. That was it. It all happens quick, like a car accident happens.

NS: Did you get the boat back?

RV: Yes, boat was going around in circles. Because I was going to make sure that – I was going to turn a little bit.

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

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

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

RV: Yes.



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

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

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

RV: About 18.

NS: Were you with him?

RV: No, [thank God?].

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

RV: I'd rather not talk about it, though.

NS: Your mom – I know that Fred and [Dott?] going out on the bay. Did your mom ever go and fish?

RV: Yes, she went out. She had all her own eel pots and everything, her own boat.

NS: Really? Is she still around?

RV: Yes, she lives down [in Florida?].

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

RV: Not that much.

NS: Did she teach you things?

RV: Not really. I don't think so. I didn't go out with her that much. I was in school still, mostly. When summer came, I went out by myself. [inaudible]

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

RV: Yes, anyone that goes [clamming?] gets bit by a blue claw. We do it every day. You step on a horseshoe crab, it will cut your feet open. Three years ago, I cut from the tip of my big toe right on to the back of my heel.

NS: Oh, Jesus.

RV: About half an inch deep.

NS: What happened?

RV: When I'm clamming, I slide my feet along in the soft of mud, I slide along. I make tracks. I don't know what it was, I [didn't stop?] and check to see what it was. All I felt, it was like – [imitates fast cutting sound]. It went right through my foot.

NS: This was the spine of the horsefoot?

RV: I'm not sure. It could've been a piece of glass, could've been a piece of metal stuck in the mud when I came across it with my foot.

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

RV: It didn't even hurt.

NS: Yes?

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

NS: Were you living here at that time?

RV: Yes. I didn't even go to the hospital. I just washed the whole thing out and butterfly stitched it. I was like, "I ain't going to get 200 stitches on the bottom of my foot."

NS: Oh, God.

RV: I'm better off with butterfly stitches. So, I put tons of butterfly stitches.

NS: You did this yourself?

RV: With my mom.

NS: Wow. I mean, that's pretty scary.

RV: Yeah, not really.

NS: I guess it sounds scary to someone like me. [laughter]

RV: This happens. Once it happens, you can't do nothing about it. [You're cut?].

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

RV: Yes, something different happens to you every day, not bad things. You see something new every day out there.

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

RV: People putting their boats up on the meadows, I guess. [laughter] Those big racing boats coming down the bay like 80 miles an hour and hit the meadows.

NS: [laughter]

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

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

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

NS: Some of these guys who go out and whatever, I'm sure you've seen some pretty stupid things.

RV: Yes, plenty.

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

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

NS: [laughter]

RV: 200 people coming down the channel like it's the Long Island Expressway and not one of them knows what the heck they're doing.

NS: [laughter]

RV: It's like the Long Island Expressway rush hour on a Sunday. The state channel's right across the bay. It's only 60, 70 yards across at one point.

NS: Woah. [A lot of the boats around here?]?

RV: Yes, a lot of boats.

NS: Did you have a bay house?

RV: No.

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

RV: I went right across the bay here.

NS: I mean, what would you do with the duck once you had it?

RV: Take them home, skin them and eat them.

NS: How would you fix them?

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

NS: What would you soak them with?

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

NS: Oh, God. Were most of them usually dead by the time you got them?

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

NS: That would be the end of it.

RV: Put them out of their misery.

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

RV: To the over. Dry them off, and then there's just a little feathers left. Not feathers but it's the down. The stuff –

NS: Like a fuzziness?

RV: Yes. Then you take it and put it over a gas burning stove and you turn the duck. It smells like hair burning.

NS: Oh, God.

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

NS: What would you stuff them with?

RV: Stuffing.

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

RV: The type that you buy in the supermarket. What kind, just regular stuffing.

NS: Okay, I wasn't sure if you had your own special recipe or not.

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

NS: How do you fix it? You'd just buy stuff from the store?

RV: Yes, you buy stuffing. I never really stuffed it myself. My mother fixed it for me. I haven't had duck, since my mom – I haven't had duck in two years now, [inaudible] wild duck. I haven't went hunting, I think about three years now, haven't gone hunting.

NS: Mostly you catch black duck around here?

RV: You catch black duck and mallard ducks, geese. If you want, you can shoot the brant, but they're not good to eat.

NS: How come?

RV: They eat all the cabbage and junk on the bottom. They stink when you cut them open.

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

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

NS: I know some people...[break in audio]

RV: So, they're like a goose, [related to geese?].

NS: So, they're not local duck?

RV: Not really around here. There's a big flock of them. There's big flocks of geese and the brant will hang out right over here, there's a golf course right across the [canal?]. Every night and every morning, they fly over.

NS: Huh.

RV: All at once, all you'll hear is [makes bird call]. We got about 2,000 brants and geese here. They fly across the bay.

NS: [laughter]

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

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

RV: You can tell if you get up close to them.

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

RV: The black ducks, and then you got mallard ducks. White ducks, [if you want to?] shoot

them.

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

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

NS: Yes.

RV: It depends how long hunting season has been open. If it's been open for a couple of weeks, they're scared because everybody's been shooting at them.

NS: [laughter] What about in the beginning?

RV: In the beginning, you set out your stools and you get a whole flock of them coming in right away.

NS: Five feet away, ten feet away?

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

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

RV: They come flying in by the hundreds.

NS: [laughter]

RV: You can't even load your gun fast enough.

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

RV: Yes. [inaudible] here and there.

NS: [laughter]

RV: Let me see, I've gotten stuck, but I haven't gotten stuck where I had to sit out the whole tide.

NS: Really?

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

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

RV: I don't know, an hour.

NS: Oh, my God.

RV: Pushing the boat across the bottom. [inaudible] how many boats out of there when tide goes down.

MS: High and dry.

RV: Boat full of clams? Sometimes you got to push – A mile and a half, you got to push and the boat is running on the runners, on the bottom.

NS: Oh, good.

RV: If you want to get home, you got to push. A lot of times I used to just take clams right out of boat, just leave them right there. I would take a stake and put it maybe 100 yards away from them. I put the stakes, that's why I know where they are. Because I know where I put the stakes, I have the clams 100 feet, let's say, east of there. Just in case anybody does come by, they'll see the stake but they won't look down and see my clams there. My clams will be 100 yards away from the stake.

NS: Smart idea.

RV: Yes, I know.

NS: Are there any other tricks you have? I know sometimes when I went out with Cory, he'd forget where his eel pots were. Do you – ?

RV: You got to take ranges on when you set your pots. If you want to set a trap right in the middle of the bay, you got to take a range and you line something up on the shore, [two of them?]. Let's say, you take a house and the water tower. you line up the house and the water tower will be right behind it. Then you know which way they are. Looking north and south, then you got to pick another range to have, like southeast, and pick another one. Then align right up north, and point right where they are. Soon as you line that up, you [got to?] be there, right on top of it.

NS: That's pretty smart.

RV: Yes, a little tricky.

NS: Who did you spend most of your time with when you were growing up in terms of going out on the water?

RV: My father.

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

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

NS: Yes, I've heard about him. I haven't met him.

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

NS: [laughter]

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

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

RV: No.

NS: How come?

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

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

RV: I go out by myself. Well, me and Jack are sharing the fishing together. Now Jack's catching eels. Jack [boxes both here?], he works out here, too.

NS: Are we talking about Jack [Buchic?] or Jack [Barrady?]?

RV: No, Jack [Barrady?]. It's John [Buchic?].

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

RV: No, not at all. I've just been doing it for so long. [That's like saying it's] scary to work in the city. Maybe the first couple of days.

NS: Have you ever tried working on land?

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

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

RV: Quit. [laughter]



MS: Fast.

NS: Who were you working for?

RV: I was working in the fur district.

NS: [laughter]

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

NS: But you prefer the water?

RV: Oh, yes.

NS: How come?

MS: More money.

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

NS: You could do anything you want.

RV: Yes.

NS: Why the water?

RV: Why not?

NS: I'm just playing – I'm just asking.

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

NS: What do you like most about it?

RV: Of course, my family's always done it, so I might as well carry on the tradition.

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

MS: Get paid.

RV: You work for yourself, first of all.

NS: That's important to you?

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

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

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

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

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

NS: How many traps do you build?

RV: How many?

NS: Yes.

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

NS: Like this year, what did you build?

RV: Only 20 killey traps. I still got a whole bunch of brand-new eel traps I got from last year that I didn't use. If you're not smart enough to build any of them [inaudible].

NS: How many traps do you have altogether?

RV: What's that?

NS: How many killey traps do you have altogether?

RV: I got about – I don't know about 55 killey pots and about 75 eel traps.

NS: Wow.

RV: With about 150 scungilli traps.

NS: How many combs do you have?

RV: About 10 or 12.

NS: How many crab pots?

RV: I don't have any crab pots.

NS: Are they crab traps?

RV: Yes.

NS: How many crab traps?

RV: None right now.

NS: How many will you be making?

RV: Well, I'm – I don't know, I think I'll make myself about 75 of them. They're quick to make though. Of course –

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

RV: Once you get the hang of it, I could slap one – put [it right together] in about 45 minutes, if I get all the materials cut out.

NS: [laughter] It's pretty good.

RV: Everything's hog rings together because it's all wire. No nails involved. Everything's just snip, snip, put them right together. It runs about 40 hog rings involved. They go right together.

NS: How many eel pots do you have?

RV: 75.

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

RV: It depends how many get run over and stolen.

NS: Typically year.

RV: About 20 traps.

NS: Of each kind?

RV: I don't lose any of my killey traps because I set them out on the tide and I'm right there. You build killey traps when the old ones are worn out. I guess they last about three to four years.

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

RV: Well, once – It depends how many killeys I need. [inaudible] set them in the tide. [A flood set?] in the morning. Then when the tide comes up, I go around and get the traps and then you reset the traps again. You catch the tide coming down.

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

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

NS: Would that be the most you would do?

RV: Yes. Sometimes I just go out and make one set because that's all the killeys that I'll be needing that time.

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

RV: I'm not even catching killeys yet. I'm only catching [a few?], and I'm catching them right across the canal here. I just go out close to the canal and throw a bunch of traps over the [inaudible] overnight. I'll pick them up in the morning. But across the bay, I set them on the tide because killeys go up into the meadows. I set the traps before the tide comes up. When the tide comes up, killeys swim right into trap.

NS: How come killeys go up to the meadows?

RV: To get away from the fish, blue fish and stuff, snappers, they chase them up there.

NS: Really?

RV: Yes.

NS: You're not pulling my leg here?

RV: No. Al

NS: Okay.

RV: It's all the bait fish, you got to hunt for the bait fish.

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

RV: Yes.

NS: That's what Danny does.

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

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

RV: Yes.

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

RV: I do lot of pushing and a lot of walking when I'm killey-ing, that's for sure.

NS: When you go eeling, how long would you let your eel pots sit out.

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

RV: Where're you going?

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

RV: [inaudible]

MS: All right.

RV: You want some?

MS: You want some?

NS: No thanks.

RV: Are you sure?

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

RV: 24 hours. I come back the next day and get them. Leave them out in the middle of the bay [inaudible].

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

RV: I sell them all [inaudible]. In Christmas time, [inaudible] fresh market, selling a lot of eels in there. Right now, we got a tanker truck that comes from Philadelphia and picks them up.

NS: You're kidding. That's a long way to come. Is this somebody you know?

RV: Yes.

NS: You have been doing [business?] for a while.

RV: Yes. My father's been doing business with him for a long time. Everybody sells eels to him, Sheldon.

NS: What's his name?

RV: Sheldon.

NS: Is that his first name?

RV: Yes.

NS: What's his last name?

RV: I forget his last name.

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

RV: No, I don't. I [don't?] even have it written down.

NS: It's okay.

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

NS: [laughter] I'll have to meet him someday. I've heard of this truck that runs [inaudible] to keep the eels away?

RV: Yes.

NS: Makes a lot of noise, I hear.

RV: No, they pump air into it.

NS: Oh, okay.

RV: They pull the air [inaudible], they keep the eels moving. So, we water off a lot. Water stays pretty current [inaudible], I think he keeps it at 50 degrees or something, keeps the water. That's all freshwater in there. We take the eels right out of the salt water and put them right in freshwater.

NS: They stay alive?

RV: Yeah, they're hearty, the eels. They're very hearty.

NS: Do you keep any for yourself?

RV: Here and there, I don't eat eels that much. Here and there I get some smoked eels.

NS: Do you smoke them?

RV: No.

NS: Who smokes them?

RV: [Uncle?] Fred used to smoke them. I don't smoke them.

NS: Do you ever buy them?

RV: Does Cory smoke them?

NS: Yes, Cory smokes them.

RV: Yes, Cory smokes them. [inaudible]. Smokes all his eels.

NS: Now, the crabs, how long do you put your crab pots out?

RV: Overnight.

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

RV: On a good day?

NS: Yes.

RV: I don't know, 10 bushels.

NS: About how many crabs do you have?

RV: I don't know, a couple of hundred.

NS: What do you do with those?

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

NS: \$30 a bushel?

RV: Yes. I peddle to the restaurants for \$.50

NS: That's pretty good.

RV: There's a lot of steamers too.

NS: Oh, really?

RV: Yeah, I get steamers in the summer. I pump them out.

NS: These are steamer clams, right?

RV: Yes, I pump them out on an [inaudible] order.

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

RV: [At first?], in the marshes and stuff. They have certain places where their beds are.

NS: Do you go musseling?

RV: No.

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

RV: Sell them to the bait and tackle shops.

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

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

NS: About how many customers do you have here?

RV: There tends to be about 40, 50 people.

NS: That's a lot of people.

RV: Yeah.

NS: You've been working with – your family has been?

RV: Yes. Off and on, here and there. When I got something they need, they [have something?]. Then I give them a call, see what's happening.

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

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

NS: Oh, my God.

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

NS: Oh, Jesus.

RV: [laughter]

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



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

NS: [laughter] That's good. I noticed the anchor on the front lawn. Is that yours?

RV: It was my father's.

NS: Where did it come from?

RV: From the skiff. The skiff used to go and gillnet [there?].

NS: You said you don't go gillnetting, how come?

RV: No. There aren't that many fish around anymore, first of all.

NS: What did they used to – what did they catch in gillnets?

RV: [inaudible] They catch them on the draggers. Catch weakfish, striped bluefish. Just about anything that will fit in the [inaudible], that swims down the bay and'll fit in the [webbing?]

NS: How come you don't do that?

RV: I'm doing other things. You can only do so many things.

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

RV: No, let me see. I may [inaudible] this year. Last year, I went down to Florida for a couple of months.

NS: Oh, that is right.

RV: [inaudible]

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

RV: No.

NS: What were you doing there?

RV: We were clamming. We were towing a shrimp net off my Garvey.

NS: That's what I was thinking of.

RV: Yes.

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

RV: [On?] the trailer.

NS: On the trailer, and drive down. Okay, I was going to say that garvey [inaudible] wouldn't last in the ocean. So, the two of you, how long were you down there for?

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

NS: Was it pretty good?

RV: Not bad. [Couldn't get it right?], it was my first year down there and things are new to me. I found a bunch of clams down there. There were clams I saw down there. I got shrimp down there. I hear they catch a lot of bait fish down there. Not a lot, but I hear there are shiners down there.

NS: What kind of bait fish did they get?

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

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

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

NS: Really?

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

NS: [laughter]

RV: As soon as they need more money, they hop in their boat and go out and make some more money. That's the truth, too. You can ask Lenny about that.

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

RV: Yes, [everybody's?] fishing.

NS: Are there any Cubans down there fishing?

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

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

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

NS: Really, like what?

RV: I don't know, treading clams, raking clams. That's about it.

NS: Had any of the guys ever done that down there?

RV: Yes. Where we were on the West Coast, nobody goes clamming. There ain't that many clams there. Most of the clams are in the [polluted?], they call them [spoil?] areas. That's where we caught most of our clams.

NS: Are they good?

RV: Yes, they were good clams.

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

RV: No, [inaudible] clam on the bottom in east coast. You had a truck that came. It went all around the state of Florida.

NS: Wow.

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

NS: Yes.

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

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

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

NS: I guess not many fishermen got work in two areas. That is why I am asking.

RV: I don't know. They were shrimping and that's like drag. So, work where you want to work. That's the way it is in any place. You work in the bay, you work where you want to work. So, anything anybody else owns is what's in their boat.

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

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

NS: Yes.

RV: They get killeys for me. I know my way around the [inaudible]. At least, respect for each other. Know what's good for them.

NS: How many full-time baymen are there around here?

RV: About a couple hundred.

NS: Really?

RV: Between where? What do you mean?

NS: Like right here in mid [inaudible].

RV: There's not many here. You go out east, you got a bunch out east.

NS: Oh, yes, you know all the [Bonickers?]. But I'm talking about like right here [inaudible].

RV: There's not many.

NS: Are you and your family about it?

RV: I'd say, there's about 25, that come right now [inaudible]. There's probably about 30, 35, 40 guys [inaudible] that go out here and that's between everybody, clam diggers and whatnot.

NS: You know all of them?

RV: I know most of them.

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

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

NS: Is there pretty much cooperation?

RV: Yes, everybody respects each other. You just don't go and work on top of someone. It's a whole bay out there. You just don't do that.

NS: So, this is pretty much your territory?

RV: No. I won't say that. Anybody can work where they want to work. But if you're working – say I'm working right here, you just going to come up right next to me and [start?] working. A

couple hundred yards over or whatnot. You don't come right on top of someone.

NS: Do you keep an eye on what the other guys are doing?

RV: Of course, everybody does.

NS: How do you find out what's going on?

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

NS: Does anybody tell each other anything?

RV: Yes. Depends who they are.

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

RV: No, they don't ask questions like that. They just – if anything happened out there, say, they [inaudible] potting eels yet. They'll say, "What's going on out there? Anybody catching any eels?" [inaudible]. Most will tell them the truth.

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

RV: What's that?

NS: Like if somebody asked you, "How are you doing?" If you are not doing well? What would you tell him?

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

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

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

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

RV: What?

NS: Have you ever heard that? Have you ever heard anything like that, that you shouldn't do?

RV: What do you mean? Like?

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

RV: No. There's some things that you got to be careful. That's the first thing. Be careful.

[inaudible] out there

NS: Are there certain kinds of days you should never go out on? I'm wondering, [they used?] say if there's a full moon, you shouldn't go out.

RV: What's that?

NS: I'm just passing along old wives tales that, you know.

RV: We go out on the full moons in summertime, [out?] jacking, getting horseshoe crabs on a full moon.

NS: I guess that is when they...

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

NS: You must have some really long days.

RV: Oh, yes. Killey-ing is a long day, I put in between eight to 12 hours.

NS: What time would you leave in the morning?

RV: Around 4:00 in the morning in summer, 4:30. I got to [move?] my killeys, come back here, get my boat, then I got to go out and work all night. I used to pay someone to [deliver?] my killeys for me. My mom was [delivering?] my killeys for me.

NS: That helps.

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

NS: Oh, God.

RV: [inaudible] By myself or I'll hire one of my friends to deliver them for me.

NS: I don't mean to pry, but about how much money do you make in a year?

RV: I don't know, I don't want to say.

NS: Enough to live on?

RV: Yes. I do fine. I don't have no problems financially.

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

RV: Oh, yes. Like this one time, [we're walking together down south, and if I got the money, I'm looking to get a shrimp boat.

NS: Really?

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

NS: [laughter]

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

NS: How long would you go down there for?

RV: I would go down there, I figure right after New Year's and then stay right up until about – I don't know, March. Somewhere in March, I'd come back. It depends when the weather breaks here. [When we start?] getting the warm days.

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

RV: Yes, also if they keep cool on the pollution and whatnot. I say they should stop a lot of these big boats from running around the bay. So, these big [inaudible] boats and whatnot. Some of those things are really so loud, you hear them out of the water. From what you hear out of the water, it's something like a hundred times louder underwater. I got the feeling this could be screwing the spawning processes of the fish and whatnot. They should regulate those kinds of boats to the ocean. Those big cigarettes and stuff? On a nice day, I see 50 to 60 [inaudible], they scream back and forth at 80, 90 miles an hour. They got open [inaudible], three to four Big-Block Chevy's. They got 40, 50-foot long [inaudible].

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

RV: I don't know. They should do a better job on reseeding the bay, clams, and whatnot. They spend so many —

NS: Is that DEC that does that? Environmental conservation?

RV: Yeah, they should seed it because my [inaudible] [break in audio] I don't know why they're not resetting. Some people say it's from the bottom paints on the boat, they use the copper paints, and that makes the clams sterile.

NS: Oh, God.

RV: Or something like that. You never know. They's seed out there, but not many. I don't really know too much about this...

NS: Are you going to plant seed clams?

RV: Am I?

NS: Yes.

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

NS: About how much can that cost?

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

NS: Yes.

RV: [inaudible] cost you [\$12 bucks?]. They could buy seed clams out of Maine and whatnot, tons of them, for cheap, [dirt?] cheap. The whole western end of the bay [up by Baldwin?] is full of clams, full. Why they won't let them take them out of here, and pay fishermen to go up there, get baymen to go up there, [dredge?] the clams up and sell them to the town, and let them seed the places that need it. [They'll never let them?] take clams out of there, there's thousands and thousands of bushels of clams die up there every year. Some of them take them out. That's another wasted process right there. [inaudible] those they want to come out. They want to check you out and busting chops all the time.

NS: Like where did they get your...?

RV: Checking licenses, checking the seed and whatnot.

NS: Everyone's going to [inaudible] it. Do you think you will be able to make the living off of it?

RV: Oh, sure, there's always somewhere else to do. If not here, somewhere else. If this place ever died out, I'd take off out of there in a flash.

NS: Everyone keeps saying it's going to be done in ten years. Do you think there's any truth to that?

RV: [inaudible]. There's always [somewhere to go?].

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

RV: Yes, [I enjoy it?].

NS: Did any of your other friends ever say, "What're you going to do, Ricky?" Did any of your other friends [inaudible] to work on the water?



RV: Not really. A couple of my friends tried it and whatnot. Not just anybody can get in the boat and go out there and make a good living. I mean, anybody can walk in and rake clams and whatnot. [It's?] a different story once when you got to go out there and catch fish. Anything that swims is a lot harder to catch than the clams. The clams are just sitting there.

NS: [laughter] Sure.

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

NS: Right.

RV: You can always go out and rake clams. You can always go out and catch [inaudible] [bag of?] clams. You can't always go out and catch 50 cans, 100 cans of spearing. You can't always go out and catch 100 boxes of fish, a couple hundred pounds of eels.

NS: Definitely [need?] something that you learn from people around you.

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

NS: What are some of the things you've learned on your own?

RV: I learned to killey by myself.

NS: Really? Did your dad just say, "Go catch some killeys?"

RV: I never killeyed while my father was alive.

NS: How come you started?

RV: All the customers, all the year, all boats, everything [are full?]. I like shiner fishing too.

NS: You like what?

RV: I like catching shiners, spearing and killeys. Killey-ing is sort of boring, though. That's really boring. That's probably one of those boring things I've [inaudible].

NS: [laughter] What do you like most?

RV: Eel, combing eels.

NS: How come?

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

NS: It must be hard to get it off the comb. Did they ever slip around the boat?

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

NS: Oh, wow, high-tech poles?

RV: Yes.

NS: [laughter]

RV: The deeper the water, the wooden poles, they shimmy, they shake from going into the water, you know what I'm saying? Steel poles, they [run along?] nice and smooth, they go right to the bottom nice. The wooden poles, you got push on. Those hanging on the poles, keep them on the bottom [inaudible] water and the power of the water is driving the pole up. Steel poles, they sink right in. You can comb 20, 22 foot of water with a steel pole.

NS: Wow.

RV: The wooden pole [inaudible].

NS: How shallow of water can you get into?

RV: I've only been in – [inaudible] a couple places, four foot of water, five foot of water on high tide. If it's low tide, five foot of water.

NS: What's the shallowest water that you get into when you're killey-ing and stuff.

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

NS: [laughter]

RV: I do a lot of pushing. I get up on the bow, and I do a lot of pushing for killey-ing. I get up on the bow with the pushing pole.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Nicole Zador 8/10/2024