

Interview with Anita Best

Narrator: Anita Best

Interviewer: Millie Rahn

Location: New Bedford, MA

Date of Interview: September 21, 2007

Project Name: The Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project

Project Description: This project documents the history and culture of the commercial fishing industry and other port trades. The project was begun in 2004 in conjunction with the Working Waterfront Festival, an annual, educational celebration of commercial fishing culture which takes place in New Bedford, MA. Interviewees have included a wide range of individuals connected to the commercial fishing industry and/or other aspects of the port through work or familial ties. While the majority of interviewees are from the port of New Bedford, the project has also documented numerous individuals from other ports around the country. Folklorist and Festival Director Laura Orleans and Community Scholar and Associate Director Kirsten Bendiksen are project leaders. The original recordings reside at the National Council for the Traditional Arts in Maryland with listening copies housed at the Festival's New Bedford office.

Principal Investigator: Laura Bendiksen, Laura Orleans

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Abstract

On September 21, 2007, Millie Rahn interviewed Anita Best as part of *The Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project*. Anita Best grew up in a family deeply connected to the fishing trade. Her father and brothers were fishermen and she discusses the seasonal aspects of fishing, lumbering during Christmas time, and the family-oriented nature of fishing. Anita's family had strong traditions of storytelling, and she recalls watching her father and uncles repair nets, sing songs, and share stories. Anita describes the shift in gender roles in the fishing industry that happened in the late 70s, marked by Vicky Silk's suit for unemployment. Even though the 70s was a noticeable shift from the past, Anita discusses the ways in which women were always involved in the fishing industry. She describes her love of music and her work with folk-rock band Figgy Duff, where they performed traditional Newfoundland songs with rock elements. When thinking about the traditional canon, Anita notes that it often portrays romantic and soft versions of women, or doesn't include them at all. She gravitates toward songs about women working and hopes to see more recognition of their contributions. Anita ends by sharing more details about the roles women currently, and historically, had within Newfoundland's fishing industry.

[NOTE: Buzzing on right speaker channel and some on left channel, can't discern much of what MR says and parts of what AB says]

MR: Today is September 21st, 2007. My name is Millie Rahn. [inaudible] I have great delight in interviewing my friend Anita Best. I'll let Anita tell us about herself, her connection to the fishing industry, as a folklorist and ambassador for [inaudible], stories songs [inaudible]. Why don't we start with [inaudible].

AB: OK. My name's Anita Maude Best. I'm called after my Aunt Maude and my cousin [inaudible]. And, my father's cousin I should say. I was born in Merasheen, on Merasheen Island in 1948, before Newfoundland joined Canada. I lived in Merasheen until I was about ten years old. Our family then moved to St. John's. Later—I used to go back all the time. Every holiday I'd get on the train in St. John's and go out and get the [coastal?] boat back to Merasheen Island. Until I was sixteen, seventeen and then the place was resettled, pretty well, in 1966. The place was resettled during the [centralization?] program of [Joey Small's?] government at that time. People from Merasheen moved to different places. They left Merasheen, they went to Marystown. Or some went to St. John's. Some to Trepassey. Various other communities. Most of them I think were in the Placentia area. Placentia [inaudible].

[02:10]

AB: So. My father was a fisherman, and his brothers. They had a fishing enterprise that you used cod traps. And, fishing was a seasonal round. They [prosecuted?] the inshore fishery, so it was herring and lobsters in the spring. Then trap fish, cod fish in the trap, in June. And they'd be up until July. Squids and [inaudible] in August. And then in the fall of the year some people would have gill nets out for cod fish. There'd be more herring being caught then in the fall of the year as well. After Christmas, and sometimes before Christmas, people would—the men would go off in the lumber woods. In some cases. And they would be working there until the spring fishery started. But the woods who didn't go off in the lumber woods were in the woods themselves, cutting the wood for their own families. So that was the [inaudible]. Fishing was a family-oriented activity. Everyone in the family was involved in the fishery. In my younger days, it was the salt fish fishery. So the fish would be caught, and gutted, split, and salted. Washed out and dried [inaudible], fish flakes. Anything [inaudible]. And that would take place in June to July. It was from daylight—the very breaking daylight until you couldn't stand up any longer in some cases. [inaudible]

MR: [inaudible]

[03:50]

AB: Oh yes. Children, we always had to help with fish. Various things. We used to spread fish, and turn it over. We always had to be turning it over. Each fish was handled so many times. I mean... You have no idea. Each fish was handled by hand, *so* many times. It was washed. And dried. Turned over. Brought in if it was going to be rain. Brought out again. [chuckles] Turned over again. Yeah. So by the time the fish was dried, we would have handled each fish a hundred and fifty times.

MR: [inaudible]

AB: Everyone in the family was involved. Old and young, you know, was involved in that. Because school was out at that point.

MR: Where were the fish [inaudible].

AB: They'd be put in the schooners and—or various [boats?—and, sold to some of the big fish merchants. Some people would—before my time people would go into St. John's. They'd fill their schooners with the salt fish. They'd be pressed down, you know with presses. They'd press down in wooden containers, to make as much as possible fit into the schooners. They brought it into St. John's and sold it to the fish merchants in there.

When I was a kid, [Wareham's?] from [inaudible] used to send a [culler?] around. And they used to buy the fish from the men in the communities. So, Wareham's would send a big boat around, and they'd purchase from the communities.

MR: [inaudible]

[05:30]

AB: Oh yes [laughs]. My mother would say when the fishing was over, in lots of cases the men would be home. They wouldn't be going in the lumber woods to the lumber camps on the west coast. In central Newfoundland were the big lumber camps for the pulp and paper mills. The men would be in the house more because, in the summertime—from the spring, to, you know, the late fall—you'd hardly see your father. And you'd hardly see you the men in the house. They'd be out on the [flakes?] and stages and in the wharves and the [twine lofts?]. And so you'd hardly see them. But once the fishing was over, then, they were in the house underfoot as my mother would say [laughs]. Because the women—lots of times, men were away, too. They went—you know, some men, shipped to other men in other communities. They signed on as crew members. We called it being shipped to somebody. So somebody in your family— either your brothers or your uncles, they might ship to Wareham's down in Harbour Buffett and they'd go down to Harbour Buffett and live. So other guys would be shipped to people in Merasheen. And they'd come up. So there was a big switchover of people coming from different communities and so on. And in some fishing enterprises, they had a big bunk house. Where the men used to sleep. But my father and his crowd, they were, I think eight of them at any given point, at the fishery. They operated out of their own houses, their own fishing premises.

MR: Were you anxious [inaudible].

AB: Oh, not at all! [laughs] We never had any idea that there was anything dangerous about doing it. Because we spent our lives in boats. And boats to us were not dangerous. I know our uncle—when we were swimming... We'd go swimming in the harbor. This would be in August, late August. And there mightn't be much on the [inaudible], you know in the way of working at the fishery. There'd still be a little bit of fishing happening, but, it was fixing nets and hauling up gear and doing stuff like that, that they'd be at. And, if the kids were—the children were out swimming my uncles would lie on the bank. They'd be sort of keeping an eye on us without letting it be known that they were keeping an eye on us. They were sort of, taking a spell. They'd lie on the bank, and they'd, just—with their back against the rocks, and they'd chat away. And, smoke their pipes. They might sing a few songs. You know, trade yarns. It was

great. It was a really great time. In my childhood. And also, in the wintertime, when you got out of school, it was dark already, pretty well. And, your father and your uncles might be down in the twine loft. And you'd go down and hide in the twine loft, hide behind the big heaps of twine. They was [cutting twine?] They used it in their cod traps. And that would be preserved with all kinds of tree resins. Pine tar. American pine tar. [inaudible] most of the names [inaudible] all these preservatives. And they'd dump them into a big [barking?] kettle, which we called a tan pot. Some people called them barking kettles. There'd be a fire lit under that in the spring of the year. All the nets would be brought out and dumped in that. But they'd be repairing them during the winter. So that smell was in the wood everywhere. It was in the twine loft. We would smell of pine tar. I can smell it now. And we'd go and get up on the big heaps of twine—often we'd go to sleep in there. Because it was so warm, you know, inside with the sun shining on the loft, around this time of the year. And the men would be repairing the holes in the twine in the various parts of the cod traps. And they'd be talking away. You just had to be really quiet. Because if you made a fuss or made a noise, or whined, they threw you out and made you go home back to the house. But, if you were really quiet you could observe everything that was going on. They'd sing songs. And again, they'd tell stories. And we found out all kinds of secret information. They just forgot you were there. [inaudible] But I remember those, particularly, old things, you know, in the twine loft. Like my Uncle [Mackin?]. My great uncles had gone to Oporto in Portugal. And they brought back Port wine in the—you know, boxes, and casks and stuff. And "Oporto" was stamped on them, and Portuguese writing was stamped on them and boxes of all kinds. Matches. Tobacco. Used to come in sticks. There'd be tobacco boxes, which were really useful for keeping things in, because there was no plastic at the time. And you used to comb the beaches looking for stuff that had drifted ashore. And, boxes would be great. Cigar boxes. And cans—candy cans. Candy used to come in tins then, with a little handle—a tin cover and a handle. I know that—I can't remember [inaudible]. And you'd try and get those tins if you could. Because they were great for picking berries. In the fall of the year, that was a big enterprise, picking berries. Mostly, led by the women, and teenage boys and youngsters. They'd go off, over the hills. And they'd pick *gallons* and *gallons* of berries. The teenage boys, of course, would be there for bringing the stuff back. Because it was too heavy for the women to carry. [inaudible] bringing was fifty pound, seventy-five pound sacks of berries back. They'd be—the berries'd be put into a [inaudible] tub. Later on when the weather went colder and freezing, water would be put on them. They'd freeze. If you wanted to get berries, to make jam [inaudible] you'd go down with a little hatchet. There was always a little clean hatchet. And you'd chop out [inaudible], ice, you'd chop out the berries.

MR: [inaudible]

[11:59]

AB: Yeah. Well, I didn't go fishing as a child. I mean, our father would take us out, to the trap. I didn't actually work at the fishery, of course, when we were very young. But, in my teenage years, everyone went [squidging?] and it was [inaudible]. Actually, it was one the, almost sort of courting rituals. For teenage girls and boys. Teenage boys would take the teenage girls out [squidging?] and...

MR: And could you explain what [squidging?] is?

AB: You had these jiggers, these little tiny jiggers that.... Well, you know what a [squidger?] looks like. It has little teeth all around it. And you would... The thing about – the reason why they would do this was, a) it was some way of expressing the girls, and b), squids would always squirt, black ink. And, you know? It was great fun for the guys to see the girls shriek and [laughs] and the black ink got squirted all over them, stuff like that. The kids loved it. We all loved [squidging?], it was. You could do it—it wasn't dangerous or anything. It wasn't that arduous, because, in most cases there were so many squid you'd just put the jigger down and pull it up and there'd be at least one or two, clung to it, you know? It was kind of—some families used to dry the squids and eat them. Or sell them dried. Sell them—the Portuguese and Spanish liked to buy the dried squids. And, some squids were so fresh, so they could be frozen for bait. They'd be used on the trawls. On the hooks, as bait. When we were catching fish with baited lines. Hand lines as they'd call them. Hand trawling.

MR: One of the things—the theme here of the festival this year is women in the industry. And, much of what you've been saying [inaudible].

AB: Yeah. Men caught the fish.

MR: Do you think that's changed?

AB: And, women, you know, were certainly a large part of the processing of it. And that's still true today, I think. Although, more and more now, women are going out on trawlers, you know? With their families. And since—in Canada there was a big shift. Women started getting into the boats when the Canadian government recognized women as fishermen. And they could—as fisher people. And then they could draw UI, like the male members of the family could always, you know, by selling their fish they could get stamps to draw UI, in the winter.

MR: Right. Unemployment insurance.

AB: Right. That's the unemployment insurance. Because most people can't fish in the winter. Unless you have the boats that go off really far. But inshore fishery, really can't be [prosecuted?] in the winter. There's just too much snow and ice around. It's just...the fish [don't come out?]. And... Now, I noticed that—well, in the 70s women started getting in boats. Because I married in 1977, I think it was. Because Kate was born in 1979. So I married in 1977. Around that time—I can't remember exactly. The first woman—she was actually from British Columbia, her name was Vicky Silk. She fought a case in court in Newfoundland. To claim—she was fishing with her husband at the time. And she couldn't get her UI. And she thought this was unfair. So she brought it to court. As a result of that case, women could then draw their—you know, get UI the same as men. So they do now. And, South East Bight, the community that I married into, women were very prominent there, in the fishery. In fact, the wharf master—what we called the wharf master, I don't know what you call it here—but, the person who would be minding the wharf and registering all the catches, you know, for the buyers and so on. She was a woman. The first one in Newfoundland, I think. And that would have been in the late seventies.

And, the women *always* worked on the dock, as the fish came in. Now, South East Bight's a very small community. There's only a hundred people, hundred and fifty people, now living there. I was the hundredth person to live there. So, it wasn't a very large community. But, once that happened in South East Bight, I think other women around the bay started—around Placentia Bay—started taking on jobs that had been previously held by men. You know, wharf master and driving the forklifts and stuff. As the thing became more, mechanized, you know? Everything was done by hand when I was a kid. Then when I got married it was all, forklifts, and ice. Everything was iced and, sold fresh. You only had salt fish if you wanted to have some yourself for the winter. You sold all of your fish fresh. Which was great, because it wasn't so much work. All you had to do was really gut it. You left the head on in most cases. Yeah. Head on, gutted. And that was how fish was sold. By the pound. And, you know, as quality controls and stuff like that have improved, the fish are gutted sooner and they're put on ice—they carry ice out with them, and all that kind of stuff. So, quality control is much better than it was when I was a kid.

[18:00]

MR: And you sing a lot. Maritime songs.

AB: Yeah. I started singing—I come from a family that always sang. My father and his brothers were great singers. His two sisters didn't sing. But. My mother and her sisters sang. But her *brothers* didn't sing. So, it was kind of an interesting family connection. My mother's from Tack's Beach, another small community. Not far—I'd say twenty, twenty-five miles from Merasheen Island. So, I just heard songs all my life. That was the method of entertainment. There was no electricity on Merasheen. And, to entertain themselves people sang, they danced, told stories. There was the occasional wind-up phonograph that played seventy-eight records. They weren't really a novelty, you know? Then, as radios became more and more affordable, we started listening to [inaudible] U.S., actually. There was a naval base in Argentia. And somehow the signal was relayed and we could pick up [inaudible] U.S. out in the bay. It was a lot of rhythm and blues, and jazz, American music happening on that station.

MR: [inaudible]

AB: Oh, yes. Yes. Placentia and Argentia, I mean that was—people spoke [with a Boston?]. My Aunt Dora, who was always worried about dropping her *gs* in *ing* words, she would actually put *gs* on words that didn't have them in the first place [laughs].

MR: [laughs]

AB: My father made up a little rhyme, to make fun of her. Let's see... Parding, Mrs. Harding, Is my kitting in your garding? [laughs]

MR: [laughs]

AB: And, you know, she was always, very...trying to clean up our language and get us to speak less informally, properly. Because, Merasheen people were educated people and should speak properly. They shouldn't be talking slang, like the crowd down the bottom of the bay! [laughs]

MR: [laughs]

AB: Yeah, so.... But she used to say the Bosting states. I always wondered, you know, if it was a gerund or whether it was a present participle, and what was *to bost*? [laughs] What would *to bost* be?

MR: You were talking in the school program earlier today, [inaudible] the Portuguese connections [inaudible]. New Bedford has a lot of Portuguese history, and Merasheen [inaudible].

AB: Yeah. When we moved into St. John's, the waterfront was a very vibrant place. The St. John's waterfront was hopping all the time. A lot of fishing boats would be in there. And cargo boats. And all kinds of vessels. From everywhere in the world. But, the white fleet would come in. Toward the end of the summer. They'd be fishing out on the banks all summer, and they'd come in toward the end of the summer, August, September, you know? Around this time of the year. They'd come in to St. John's, spend a couple of days in port. Those—the white fleet was called that because they had big white sails. Some of the boats themselves were painted white. They'd come in, and they'd shop downtown. In the dollar stores, what we call dollar stores now. This is like the [Arcade?] and Woolworth's and stuff. We could see them. You know, they were completely different from stuff. Very swarthy, and, you know, with their fishermen's gear on. And they'd be buying little underwear for their wives. [laughs] And shoes. And things for their children to bring home. And they played—they used to be playing football on the harbor apron or up in Bannerman Park. And they had accordions and they'd be playing music up in Bannerman Park. It was great for us. My father, of course, was a very social person. He was in the British Navy during the war. He had a great affinity for fellows who traveled the world on boats, you know? He saw himself as kind of an adventurer that way. He used to bring a scattered Portuguese sailor home for Sunday dinner. He'd have Sunday dinner with us. A couple of them would have Sunday dinner with us. After we moved into St. John's. Yeah, we'd be just starting school when they'd be there. Of course there's a gorgeous statue of Our Lady of Fatima up in the cathedral of St. John the Baptist. [inaudible] There's some gorgeous footage [inaudible]. I hope you'll see it some time. Of all the Portuguese fishermen bringing that statue through the streets of St. John's up the hill, and into the basilica. They all used to go up there and pray.

[23:25]

MR: And you're also [inaudible]. And certainly [inaudible]

AB: Yeah. Yeah.

MR: [inaudible]

AB: Yeah, well it was nothing to see foreign vessels in the little ports at home. Down in Harbour Buffett. There was always one or two vessels down there. Portuguese vessels. Sometimes even Spanish vessels. You know? They'd come in there to purchase stuff. Sell stuff. God knows what they'd be doing. But, you know, you'd see them because—what interested in me about them—I didn't really take an interest in their activity so much as the

strangeness of the names that were painted on the boats. And their language they would be speaking. You'd hear these odd languages. I've always had a real keen interest in language. And the music. Sometimes they'd be singing and playing the concertinas, or accordions or whatever. They'd be singing. Sometimes they'd put their boats ashore and paint them, or clean them or whatever. They'd be sprucing them up a bit. Especially if there was a storm outside, and they had to come in because of the storm. St. John's was pretty handy, too. When we moved into St. John's, there was a place that a lot of foreign vessels would go, in the event of a storm, coming up from down this way. They'd all head in so the harbor would be packed with boats waiting for the storm to get over.

MR: And a lot of [inaudible] Remember [inaudible].

AB: Yeah. Yeah I'm very interested in history and in oral history. Nowadays the culture is so pervaded by electronic media. Kids have TV and there's movies and radios on. And, cultural items that are heard through these media are not Newfoundland cultural items for the most part. It's the great, North American sort of Hollywood. It's not even American, really. Because it's really Hollywood stuff. I like to sort of be able to present, you know, people their own history. My hope always is that young people will listen to the old tunes and songs, and bring it into their own generation in their own way. As we did with Figgy Duff. I mean, we took those old songs from Newfoundland that we'd heard and collected from people and so on and brought them into a sort of a trad rock thing, which was—that was the sixties thing. Trad rock. You know? Steeleye Span and Fairport were on the [go?]. I remember Noel Dinn and Neil Murray, two of the original people behind Figgy Duff. You know, I collected—the songs that I had collected from people that I knew already, passing them along to them. I was the first female singer in Figgy Duff. I was a teacher at the time. So I only sang during one summer with the band, travel with the band and then I left and went back to school. Pamela Morgan took my place. And then she went down to make recordings with the band. That's what *our* generation did. And my hope would be that the *next* generation would, you know, take the songs and tunes and do whatever they like with them. That is happening to some degree. Some of the music students [inaudible]. Taking the old tunes into jazz, and into new compositions. Kind of a fusion, you know?

MR: [inaudible]

AB: Yeah. It's good, it gives people a certain sense of self-esteem when you realize, "This is our own music," you know? "This is really unique to us." It's hard to say about folk music, you know, where it belongs to. You know, *Maid on the Shore*. Where does that belong to? It's still being sung in Newfoundland, but it probably came over from England or Scotland. Many of the songs that we sing in Newfoundland came with our ancestors. Some were made up in Newfoundland. Some were made up in the United States and came up that way. People—men, you know, meeting one another out on the Grand Banks, and they got transmitted around into the different communities, to the lumber camps. Various things like that. So, I always feel weird about saying Newfoundland music. It's such a nebulous term really. You can say I suppose that songs made up by Newfoundlanders, about Newfoundland, are Newfoundland songs. But what lots of what we might consider to be—you know, British broadsides, people consider to be Newfoundland songs. Lots of Irish [inaudible], ballads—[laughs] [inaudible] to call them ballads—you know, people think of them as Newfoundland songs. I had someone argue with me one time *The Fields of Athenry*, you know, was a song that her grandfather had taught her you

know. He'd learned when he was a boy. Sorry [laughs]. *The Fields of Athenry* was not a song her grandfather [laughs] learned as a boy. But you know, people have that feeling. They hear an Irish song. It relates to their own experience. It's the *kind* of music they listen to. The accent is similar in many cases. Certainly, the Avalon Peninsula has an awful lot of Irish-sounding people.

[29:35]

MR: And, [inaudible] sing a lot of songs about [inaudible]

AB: I do, yeah. Yeah. I don't know—I'm sort of—you would be able to call me a traditional singer in the sense that my mother was a traditional singer. Because, mom sang unconsciously. She only sang the songs that she learned and liked. And, I have a sort of—I'm always aware of the audience I'm singing to. I'm always aware that, you know, maybe I'm singing too many songs about men. Or too many songs about women appearing in a weak light. So then I'll sing songs where women seem to be stronger and so on. But that's a conscious decision on my part. And that's where I think the difference between a regular, traditional singer and a professional, traditional singer—professional folk singer, you know. Not only the money part. Because I get paid and my mother certainly never got paid for singing.

MR: But then, you also come from a culture where women are very strong. They have to be strong...

AB: Exactly. Exactly. But the song canon doesn't reflect that. It doesn't—I mean, women in England. The work in the mills, you know, did all that. They were quite strong, too. But the English song canon does not reflect that, in many, you know. – certainly percentage-wise, it doesn't reflect really strong women. It reflects...you know, romantic notions or lyric notions of women, or whatever. It's an interesting aspect, but I enjoy, you know, singing the songs where women were doing work. And, you know, they were having adventures, were looking after themselves. They struck out, and did things. I like to sing songs that convey that kind of an idea. Because I think that, even though they're few in number in terms of the whole gamut of folk song, I don't think the experience of women was, you know, reflected. I think that women themselves actually were doing those things, and it's good for people to remember. Because if you just rely on what you read, you just think that women were invisible on the face of the earth in most cases. I mean, women's history—how many times have you tried to find somebody in an archives? You know, under the name of Mrs. John Smith? You know, here name is neither John nor Smith [laughs].

MR: [laughs]

AB: Who is she? [laughs]

MR: [laughs] I know, and I think that that's sort of [inaudible]. By the end of the festival [inaudible] much more, have documented, much more [inaudible] change. [inaudible]

AB: And in some cases they're getting paid for it and they never got paid before.

MR: Right.

AB: Like the fishing enterprise at home. You know, the men got paid, we'll say. And his name would be on the books and the records and so on. But really it was all the family who made the money. Everybody in the family. The woman—fifty percent of the work was done by the woman. As Hilda Chaulk Murray says, more than fifty percent [laughs]. Women were just totally involved in the fishery at home. And the salt fish. And, when the fresh fish—when it came to be fresh fish time, the women started working in the plants. And, started going out on boats. But, I must say, in my childhood women hardly ever went out on boats. Now there was, individual women, who were considered to be a little eccentric, who would go out in their own boats and have their own—but you know, they were extraordinary women. It wasn't the general housewife who did that. They were generally unmarried women.

MR: Well. We could go on and on for hours [inaudible]. But, is there anything else that you'd like to say?

AB: I don't know—what, the focus of the interviews would be, women in the...?

MR: Women in the industry. And also because, we're interested in interviewing you because you come from a maritime culture, and it's your first time here in New Bedford. [inaudible]

AB: Yeah. I haven't had a chance to see, but—I know that women are certainly involved now in the way that the fishing businesses are run. You know, there's accountancy that needs to be done. And women are always involved in that. My sisters-in-law are [inaudible] bookkeepers [inaudible]. And, in some cases, know a lot about the computers that, you know, run things on the boats [inaudible]. Some women are getting involved in the Marine Institute in St. John's. I thought that this was a fabulous idea. Because I've always been really interested in celestial navigation. I just find it really interesting, the whole idea of it. I took a course there at the Marine Institute. I found that a lot of young women now are taking courses at the Marine Institute with a view toward working on the oil rigs. On the really—the fishing vessels that go off shore, really off shore. So that's kind of an interesting [inaudible].

[35:30]

MR: [inaudible] more about that. One of the things this project is doing is really documenting [inaudible].

AB: Yeah, I'm sure there were. Before I finish, I just wanted to—I realize that I probably misled you in the beginning when I said in the 1970s women started fishing. On the Labrador—in the Labrador Straits, I think long before that, women have been going out in their boats in the inshore fishery there. They've been involved in the inshore fishery.

MR: Because families would go [inaudible]

AB: Yeah. And of course, the float—way back, the women—the fishermen that left the island of Newfoundland and fished on the Labrador, there were two types. The floaters, who didn't have a particular place where they'd stay. They just went around and collect fish and store it

aboard the boat. And then, salt it wet, and dry it when they came home. And then the stationaries who had places, where they were on land and they...they would spread their fish and dry it and bring home the dry salt fish. Women always went with them as cooks, and so on. Young women went as cooks. And that's a whole other story, that... It was talked about in Michael Crummey's *Hard Light*, very interesting book about the Labrador fishery [inaudible]. It's a poetic book, it's not a documentary type of thing. It talks about the emotional experiences of these women and sometimes they were...they came home, pregnant, you know, from these trips to the Labrador [inaudible]. And the women who were left at home, behind. All that. It's very interesting.

MR: I thought it was [inaudible].

AB: [laughs]

MR: [laughs]

AB: That was great, heh? That was great.

MR: Well I think we'll tie this up. Maybe we can get you to talk about some of the foodways at the foodways tent.

AB: Sure.

MR: But I'll say thank you very much.

AB: A pleasure.

-----End of Interview-----

Reviewed by Nicole Zador 11/5/2024