

## Interview with Armando Estudante

**Narrator:** Armando Estudante

**Interviewer:** Millie Rahn

**Location:** New Bedford, MA

**Date of Interview:** September 24, 2005

**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

**Transcriber:** Sarah Smith

### Abstract

On September 24, 2005, Millie Rahn interviewed Armando Estudante as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project. Armando is a fisherman and entrepreneur. Born in Portugal, he immigrated to the United States in 1978 when he was in his 50s. While he was initially visiting his parents in Philadelphia, he took a trip to New Bedford and discovered the city's vibrant fishing community. He decided to settle there permanently. Armando already had experience in the fishing industry as he was in charge of a fleet of boats in Portugal. Armando and his wife established themselves in New Bedford. Armando started working on fishing boats, gradually transitioning from larger ships to fishing vessels. He discusses the challenges faced by fishermen, advancements in boat technology and safety, and the impact of regulations on the industry. To adapt to these regulations, Armando obtained permits for both groundfishing and scalloping. Armando reflects on the role of management in sustaining the fishing industry and the need to strike a balance between fishing effort and resource conservation. He shares the ways his wife plays a role in his work, as well as the historical significance of women's roles in fishing communities. Armando also shares his experiences with cooking, his exploration of different dishes, and the importance of providing good meals to keep the crew satisfied during fishing trips. He highlights the historical significance of immigration in fishing communities and expresses hope that immigration will play a greater role in the future. Armando explains how the lack of new blood and exchange of populations has affected the industry, attributing it to the homogenization of world economies and reduced incentives for people to immigrate. Armando acknowledges the challenging nature of scalloping, which often involves backbreaking work. Yet, he expresses optimism about the industry's future.

Millie Rahn: Why don't you just say testing one, two, three and I'll make sure that this...

Armando Estudante: Testing, one, two, three...

MR: Great, okay...

AE: I'll make sure...

MR: Okay, it looks like we're in business, okay... Today is Saturday, September 24, 2005, and we're here at the working waterfront festival in the HDC building doing an oral history interview, um, with Armando, and how do you pronounce your name?

AE: Estudante...

MR: Estudante, okay...

AE: Estudante.

MR: Estudante. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself, your connection to the fishing industry, where you came from...

AE: Yes.

MR: ...all of that.

AE: Okay, start from the beginning, I came from Portugal in 1978, September of '78 so it's twenty-seven years... I worked in the fishing industry on shipping, commercial shipping, back in Portugal, and... I came here to visit my parents that lived in Philadelphia, and then I came to New Bedford to visit the whaling museum. I had read Herman Melville and I had to come look at... the whaling museum. Then I found out that New Bedford was a fishing community, and there was several people from my home down in Portugal here, and we decided – me and my wife we had an eighteen – sixteen months old daughter at the time, and we decided to stay. So we went through the immigration process, became legal residents, and I start working on fishing boats.

MR: All because of Herman Melville being in New Bedford.

AE: Yes. Because of – of coming to look at – that's the reason I came to New Bedford was to visit the whaling museum.

MR: Wow, that's a great story.

AE: Believe it or not.

MR: Fabulous.

AE: Yes. [02:16]

MR: They will love to know that... So your parents were already here in the states. Were they fishing?

AE: My parents were... have been in the United States – no, no, no.

MR: Okay.

AE: My parents were – they lived in Quakertown which is a small town south, I believe it's south, it's a ways, about forty miles I believe, from Philadelphia. They came with... I was, I am the oldest child, and they came without the others... they have come here 1973 or 1974, and... I came to visit them. Up until – I mean I never really thought of immigrating, of leaving the country. I have decent job there, and I have my wife established there. I was twenty-six year old at the time. So we came to visit them. So in... on vacation. And that was coming to New Bedford and seeing the boats and the people and talking to the people from my hometown and from other places around the... in Portugal that were living here, that's how we decided. We decide to stay – first we decide to stay for some time. Then we decide to stay for good and raise our children. We had one child at the time, then we had another daughter, later... eleven years later we had another daughter. And we decide to stay here and...

[03:43]

MR: And you already had the merchant...

AE: At the time I had experience and...

MR: ...connection and...

AE: Yes at the, well, when I start going to sea, I start going on merchant vessels, and then I went to fishing boats rather than large ships, factory trawlers, sort of, and there I was working ashore, just before coming here I was working ashore... in charge of a fleet of boats for a company, a fishing company, and that's how I could afford to... you know, to vacation in the United States sort of. Here it's a – we found that here it's a different, way different country than what Europe and mostly Portugal was in those days. There is more access to capital, to money, the private initiative is less in here, over there was hindrance, you could really not go much – too far if you were not connected just by your merits it was not easy. It would be fine working for somebody else but if you ever wanted to be an entrepreneur there it was rather difficult. Today it's different, I – I realize that. But in those times it was not and... you know, we saw this country as really... the place to be for a young couple, my wife start working as a sales, selling different products, copper, Mary Kay, different things. And, you know, making money, making a living right away. Which we had a good living there but, you know, we were relying on being employees for – for our lives.

MR: Mm-hmm.

AE: Here you can – you can be yourself and... implement your own ideas and try them and if they are not successful you can start something else right away.

MR: Do something else... [05:38]

AE: So we came in '78, 1980 we bought a house, that's the house we still live in, we have made additions and such but it's still the same house and that's the one we are going to retire in, and we like – we like New Bedford, very much. We don't particularly like the winter, especially that now we are in our 50s, but... we can put up with it. And, 1982, so four years later, we bought the first boat – a boat. Then we bought another one, but right now we own our fourth boat, one, two, three, four but we only keep one boat for me to work on, to go fishing. I mean we never really wanted to be a firm, you know, a company or several boat owner type of business, but rather a one boat that suits us, that we can make a living out of with a crew, and take care of properly, and that's where we are now.

MR: And you're doing groundfishing?

AE: Yes, the groundfishing and for the last seven years I also do scalloping. Since the days-at-sea and the cuts on fishing time came about to really be occupied busy for the year you really have to have more than one groundfish boat, or more than one scallop boat, or the third alternative would be a combination boat with the two permits and that's what we own for the last seven years.

MR: Mm hmm.

AE: We have a boat that... can do both scalloping and...

MR: Oh, okay.

AE: ...groundfishing. So that's where we are. [07:38]

MR: And what... tell me about the groundfishing, what... what are you doing, where are you going?

AE: We go to George's, I go to George's Bank. I have fished... here, in this coast, from, say from Maryland, yeah, from Maryland, the Maryland coast, and offshore up to the Canadian border. As of now and the boat that I have we fish off – off New England, George's Bank, the Gulf of Maine. This year, or this fishing year, I have fifty-two days to use, groundfishing. I plan on using them on the Gulf of Maine and George's Bank... fishing whatever is allowed to be caught at the time, and uh... we have the regular scallop days that we are going through right now. That's it.

MR: Scalloping's doing well I hear, this year.

AE: Yes. Scalloping is doing very, very well. It's very compensating. It's very good.

MR: I can tell that when I go to my local Shaw's. [laughs]

AE: Yes, yes, yes. And, we don't know for how long it will last but, you know, we have to – we have to count it as a blessing. Actually, it's nice – it seems sometimes there is some justice in the world because I have most of my crew members are in their 50s.

MR: Mmm...

AE: As I am, and I hear their stories about times when they were back breaking – breaking their backs shucking scallops and going culling rocks, big rock piles, which I saw when I started scalloping seven years ago, I still went through that. To make a few dollars, work year round, and... they had – still had to be thrift and thoughtful in order to raise their kids and give them an education and so on. Fortunately now in their 50s they are going through a good time, a good opportunity of putting together saving a few dollars for their retirement. So, it's really a blessing, what's going with the scallop – on the scallop fishery now. Especially for – well, I would say both for young and older people, but – but I see that as a good blessing. That's why I said that sometimes it seems there is justice after all because these people, that have been scalloping for thirty years and better, and really... I mean, always got just a pay, a small pay for the hours and the effort that they put, now they are of course working hard but seeing some – some decent money.

MR: Yeah...

AE: Yes. [10:28]

MR: I was going to ask you about some of the changes between when you started out and now.

AE: Well...

MR: Have the boats – have the boats changed?

AE: Oh yes, boats have changed. Boats are safer now, boats are newer. There is still... a good number of older boats, but in general the people that stayed in the fishery... they did so because they have the smarts and the intelligence and the ability to keep their boats in decent shape. I don't mean to say that's one hundred percent so but in – in most cases that's what happens so even older boats they are certainly today, uh... more seaworthy than a lot of what I saw twenty-seven years ago.

MR: Mm hmm.

AE: The boats are better equipped, safety-wise there is good...electronics for communications, for emergencies, EPIRBs, even the black boxes are – are good because the boat position can be – is monitored all the time. Life rafts are much better today than they were before. The Coast Guard does a good job of verifying that we are in comp – in compliance, which is a help for us, because often times things break down, alarms, I mean I just saw that on my boat, an alarm breaks down that I don't realize it because you can't check those things every day, but the Coast Guard guys, they are really good. Sometimes it seems like they are a pain in the neck, but really it's helpful that they are... doing their job the way they are. Yeah.

[12:20]

MR: What do you think makes a good fisherman?

AE: It's like a good cook, pretty much. It's a science... a science and there's art. You can

know all the... all the theories and the underlying science... for fishing, for gear fishing – gear, for, you know, catching unit vessel, and so on and so forth, but it's still an art. Has a lot to do with some maybe innate, don't – I don't know, some individual ability to – to catch the fish. It's the same thing as cooking, it's a work of art. They are all different. Cause if you just follow the recipe... and you don't have a little touch, it won't work most times. Yes.

MR: Now you were saying most of your crew are in their fifties, so, how is that...?

AE: Yes.

MR: Where is the...?

AE: We have few – five... we have seven me on the boat, five... are anywhere from fifty-two to fifty-six, and we have two guys on their – on their late 30s.

[13:40]

MR: Okay. Cause I was going to ask you where is the next generation going to come from?

AE: I don't know, and I'm concerned about that... but I'm not overly concerned, because, you know, the world is... a universe. The world, anything is dynamic, everything is dynamic. You really can't – nobody really can forecast much, even hurricanes with satellites you can just guess more or less where they go and what the strength's going to be...

MR: Right...

AE: So I'm not really worried, I'm a little bit concerned because – why? Because I only can see today and tomorrow. We can't see the future, but... I'm concerned somehow because I don't see a lot of young people coming... one of the reasons for not a lot of young people coming is that the... people like me, my age and older, are holding to their jobs for as long as they can precisely because now they are making a little bit more, some decent money, as opposed to... pretty much all their lives.

MR: Right...

AE: That's also – that's one reason. But I trust... I believe that... the fishing industry will be alive ten years or – and fifty years from now... we – it has to be with different people. I believe new people will come... to the business. It's... it was always so... Also this will be done with less people. I believe there will be... it could already be done, especially scalloping... there – there – there is improvements to be made on handling the scallops and the... processing them, that will facilitate less people, will allow less people, on the boat. In other words, the job will eventually become less back-breaking I believe, and the government will allow that to happen. Fishing for fish, catching fish, dragging, groundfishing... may not be so. It's al – there's already been a lot of improvements and there may be more in handling the gear, handling the nets, even in processing the catch. And will all – all that will play a role. And we'll divide more fish – also the money to made... I believe this is a... an industry that will not just survive, that will thrive.

MR: Mmm.!

AE: That's what I believe in. Management and regulations evidently have a lot to do with – with all this, and this is just a corner of the world where we are going – I've been here for twenty-eight years, I've been following and being followed by management, by rules, all these years, and... it's not that the managers or the regulators do a bad job, I think it's just a natural process, if you keep abreast of what's going on in Iceland, in Norway, all over Europe, all of the developed countries that fish, and they all do, you see the same... you see similar things. Management styles and management... Philosophies are being tried and abandoned in favor of others, and so forth. Basically there has to be a balance between effort, catch, and... resource ability to replenish itself.

MR: Mmm...

AE: I think that will be attained. I think we'll be able to continue to exploit the seas, without depleting them.

[17:35]

MR: I was going to ask you about that.

AE: I'm an optimist. I can...

MR: I can tell that.

AE: I can't be otherwise.

MR: Yeah... Yes, cause I've asked um... many people from different aspects of the industry where they think – you know, is there fish out there, will there continue to be fish out there, and...

AE: There is.

MR: Yes.

AE: There is fish out there... I had a fish plant, fish processing plant, for ten years.

MR: Ah!...

AE: At the time... that the – I had a boat at the same time. But for ten years I dedicated most of my effort to the – to the fish plant. That was when the groundfish stocks were... were low, and when the... the cutbacks starts, was in the eight, late eighties and nineties. Was from '88 to '98. I dedicated myself to process what was called at the time the July species. The news... and the science was saying that there was plentiful and [inasrutable?], you know, infinite stocks of skates, of dogfish, monkfish, so on and so forth. Then all of a sudden – it's not all of a sudden, it's in a matter of a few years, a... the – the science is saying that those stocks are depleted, they're gonna take a long time to be rebuilt, so the investment that was made in plants and vessels and gear to catch those species... is down the drain. I mean, that's not unfair, that's just the way things are, the way I look at it, you invest, you make money or you

don't make as much or you lose, it's – it's America, it's free enterprise. Nobody tells you what to do. You follow, you don't even follow advice, you rely your decisions on information that you have. And the information was that those resource were... huge. Then all of a sudden they did – they are not. Now a few years ago, we have... we were hearing from the regulators, the managers of the fishery that the cod was rebuilding slowly, the yellowtail was rebuilt. A lot of species, most species were on the good track, our efforts were paying, and so forth. Now, a few weeks ago, or very, very recently, it's not so. I think that has a lot to do with the assessments, with the way that the... the populations, the fish populations are looked at, and my experience... is, not just for me but from... where – where other places in the Atlantic, and from reading and talking to people from other countries, other continents, I – I was – last night I was just reading an... interview with a man older than I that's been skipper of a boat since she was built thirty-five years ago, a big, huge processing freezer-trawler, Icelandic freezer-trawler. I mean, I'm reading what he says and it's what I've been... realizing all along... Things change, and regulations try to – to balance effort, catch, with resource, and the... they fail, and you have to take new approaches, and you have to make new cuts, and how can you count the fishes in the ocean? They are not in the same spot all the time, and if you do your research on – on... your random research, your random tows, in... a number of spots and then go year after year to those spots, you are doing what bad fishermen do. You are going to the same spot expecting that the fish will be there at such date and time, and they don't keep appoint – fish don't keep appointments.

MR: [laughs] That's true. [21:55]

AE: Right? So – so I believe that the... the stocks are not in bad, bad – as bad shape as it seems. We are using very large mesh, larger than anywhere else in the world, for – for this type of fish. We are catching only the large fish. This begs the question, is this the right approach? Should we be catching just the large fish? Maybe of some species, maybe not of others, but I – that's why I believe that this being such a dynamic universe that the fishery, that eventually we'll get it right, and by trial and error some decisions will be really good, others not as good. But I don't think we are going to be out of business. I think there will be fishing forever. Different ways, different styles maybe. My grandfather, my [motherly?] grandfather, he fished the Grand Banks from Portugal on sail – on sail ships, for forty – forty years, by handline. I'm not doing anything... like his... I didn't, I haven't done it, I'm not going to do that in my life. My great-grandkids I believe if they have the willingness to go fishing, I think they will be able to go fishing, commercially. I believe that. If I'm wrong, well, who isn't sometimes?

MR: Yeah...

AE: Otherwise I would not continue to fish if I didn't believe in this.

MR: Do any of your children fish?

AE: No. I have... no. That's a maybe one thing I failed was to bring my daughters to fishing but I never did. That's a...

MR: Mmm... Well, there's always time.

AE: Yes. But uh, you know, they their own things. [24:00]



MR: Is all of your crew Portuguese?

AE: Right now, yes. Not because we want to or anything, but right now, yes. And most times. I've had Polish and, you know, American guys, Yankee guys, kids born here, grown up here, and... Spanish guys, Central American guys, once in awhile. You have a huge... you have a huge source of new blood in Central America, see.

MR: Mm hmm.

AE: You don't see a lot of – one of the reasons you – you also don't see a lot of people, new people coming to the fishery, is that there is no more exchange of people, of populations, immigration, like there was... up until a few years ago, like these was five hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, fifty years ago. You don't have that any more because the world economies have become more... homogenized, more the same, more similar, and people don't – don't feel the need to immigrate, to go to other places. The world had become more... homogeneous.

MR: Yes.

AE: More uniform. Still you have places like Central America, China, Southeast Asia, a lot of place in the world that given the opportunity they will go somewhere else to improve their lives, and that's what we are not having here right now, especially after September 11 it's very difficult for people to immigrate and... again, this being a dynamic fishery, a dynamic business activity, with a lot of science to help it but still needs the human touch, the art touch. And you don't make artists, you know, they – the evolve, they are born and they evolve.

MR: Right.

AE: So you need new blood, definitely. I think immigration is – is a great factor... in that. You see, this – this port, and I believe pretty much any port in this country, and fishing port in this country... progresses based on new blood mostly from other countries, Norway, from Portugal, from Spain, from – even from Canada there was a – a lot of immigration from Canada to here. I mean, you know all that. That's one things we are lacking right now. I think it – it will change.

MR: Yeah... well these things go in cycles too.

AE: Yes.

MR: We've had cycles... in the twentieth century where we were not letting immigrants in...

AE: Yes.

MR: ...and then we let a lot in, and then close the doors and open the doors.

AE: Of course.

[26:57]

MR: Now tell me a little bit about cooking. You're gonna do a cooking demonstration for us later this afternoon but you're talking about... the role of cooking and... the artistry, and...

AE: I start cooking only five years ago.

MR: Ah hah!

AE: I never cooked before... I could barely – I probably could not even fry an egg because as of now I cannot fry that too well... I'm not a good cook. I just became a cook as – for necessity. When the scallops became more abundant, which was about four or five years ago... I start cooking to free up the crew completely from those – from that responsibility, and at the same time to make sure that everybody got a couple of good decent meals every day. Which... if you have a good, hearty meal, you take a little longer to eat it, you relax better, you go to bed happier, and a busy crew is a happy crew but a good, fat crew is even happier.

MR: Mm hmm.

AE: So, I took a three – at the beginning it was a little bit of pain...my wife was my mentor and my teacher, she told me whatever I have the – the smartness to ask her, and she still does. It was good that there was satellite, I mean cell phones and right away at the time satellite phones because I would be calling my wife often, to ask her how to – how to follow, you know, she would give me recipes. My daughter, my oldest daughter, also helped me with some recipes, you know, and I became – I'm not really a professional cook or anything of that kind, just learned how to cooked some basic, and others not so basic dishes, cause I'm curious, very curious, like a cat pretty much. And like everything I see I enjoy knowing what's behind it, so I leaned how to cook a few dishes so I can feed a crew some nice, you know, some good meals for them, which are not, you know, epicurean dishes, they are not restaurant dishes, but it's... meat and fish galore, you know.

[29:40]

MR: Well, it's interesting because the retired fisherman I interviewed earlier this morning was saying one of the things he wouldn't be able to do today is take pizza out on the boats. He said the same thing that, you know, when you're working hard you need to eat well, you need the sustenance, and you've got an older crew too that are used to...

AE: Yeah. Yes.

MR: ...you know, kind of decent meals, and...

AE: Used to home cooked meals and...

MR: Exactly.

AE: Yeah. Even, I mean it's a... sometimes conversations, human curiosity wonders what's – how was this done? I know that from when I did not cook anything. I didn't know how to

cook anything. I didn't know how to go about it. Many times I wondered how was this done. Whatever taste, it's good or very good or tastes regular, but how did the guy or how did the man or the woman do it? And it's a topic of conversation and relaxation and laughs and times, you know? And wonder, sometimes you don't tell everything, and sometimes you do and they don't think that you are hiding something, so, you know, it makes for better ambience on the – on the boat.

MR: Yeah, food is crucial.

AE: Yes. Yes. And I found that, of course, I – I saw that going on for all the years that I did not – did never cook, and now I – I really enjoy putting up some dishes. They don't come out right because I say I don't – I also got the... especially one book, well others, but one I go back to once in awhile, to – to, you know, for some notions, some ideas, some condiments, you know, spices too, to use for this purpose, that purpose, but... you know, it – it's not like a cook that goes to school, really, no, I believe... you know, I - I know, because I've seen Paul Chef Amaral work, you see he teaches at folk, here in New Bedford, and it's really a science. If you're reading a cookbook it's really, you know, it's really a science. It's not the case, I just, you know, just put together some ingredients, give it some flavor, and keep my fingers crossed.

[32:12]

MR: Well you were saying this afternoon on the foodways stage you're going to make a fish stew like you serve on the boats.

AE: Yes, the difference is that on the boat, we do the fish stew with the... mostly steaks, fish with the bones in.

MR: Mmm hmm.

AE: That's the typical – that's a typical Portuguese dish...

MR: Right.

AE: hat with bones in because you're going to have people taste it, and – and...

MR: Right...

AE: ...we don't want anybody to choke on bones. I remember my – I mean, this is a folklore thing too – both my daughters, before they were one year old, they would make a scene each time we ate sardines, I don't know if you ever saw grilled sardines...

MR: Mm hmm.

AE: It's a Portuguese staple...

MR: Oh yeah...

AE: They are served – they are grilled and served with the bone in and you are supposed to pick the bones, even the ones that cut your mouth, you feel them right away and... and take

them, remove them, and both of my daughters before they were one year old they were not allowing my wife or me to take the bones for them. We used to take the – just the meat from the bones, before they were one year old they would not allow us. They would make a big scene, “Oh no, no, I want the bones myself,” and they would, because a child has a very sensitive mouth, and they would feel whatever bone right away and pull it out like we do. But as they grow older, the only fish that they now eat with bones is sardines a couple of times a year, and everything else they don’t, they don’t like... bones in it. So... we are – I’m going to use fish filets, and I’m not really sure if the flavor is going to be noticeably different. But I’m gonna, you know, try to come up with something. You – I think that’s what you want, a galley cook, and, you know, I’m as good as anybody else... [laughs] as any other galley cook, pretty much. I’ll also make a soup like chowder... that Portuguese fishermen cooks and others, every – every – not every, but a lot of Portuguese fishermen, oh, guys my age and older, they do a chowder, normally they use cod fish heads, and they boil it to – they make a stock, basically, and then they remove all the bones with a strainer. But that’s time consuming and... even when you remove all the bones with a strainer most often, most times, almost always, you end up with some bones left.

MR: Right. You have to beware...

AE: So I – I can’t do that, I’ll just use some fish, some cod fish filets and make – it’s a chowder with some rice, also... little cubes of potatoes. So it’s different from the – the chowder with cream. New England style chowder... it’s a fish soup, basically. [35:13]

MR: Is there many of the Portuguese fleet that come into New Bedford?

AE: You mean...?

MR: From Portugal?

AE: I’m sorry...?

MR: Well, no, they wouldn’t come into New Bedford...

AE: No.

MR: ...but do you see many... Portuguese fishermen?

AE: Vessels? Out there? No.

MR: No.

AE: There is very – I mean, the Portuguese – I come from a town in, I was born in... I was raised in a town in Portugal that was the biggest, the largest and the biggest and with the most long distance fishing vessels in the country there, and now it’s – there’s only half a dozen of fishing vessels, because regulations are, you know, are so stringent, uh... all over the world, and Portugal is part of the EU...

MR: Mm hmm

AE: So, they have a very, very small... distant waters fleet. They would not fish on... on our two hundred miles either, anyway.

MR: I just ask because when I lived... in Atlantic Canada, and that was in the early 90s, when things were – right before the moratorium there, and...

AE: Yes.

MR: ...the Portuguese fleet would be out there, and...

AE: Yes.

MR: Yeah.

AE: Where, in Newfoundland?

MR: Yeah.

AE: Yeah, I've been there.

MR: ...off of the...

AE: I've been to St. John's many times. Yes.

MR: Oh!

AE: I love – I like St. John's...

MR: ...I love St. John's... yeah.

AE: Yes.

MR: ...I'm homesick. That's where I went to...

AE: Yes.

MR: ...folklore school. Graduate school.

AE: Yeah.

MR: But... St. John's was...

AE: I was there.

MR: ...the Russians were there, the Portuguese were there...

AE: Yes, the Portuguese. Yeah.

MR: I mean... everybody's...

AE: It was a nice place to... I love St. John's really.

MR: It's a wonderful town...

AE: Yes.

MR: ...And that harbor is magic.

AE: Yes.

MR: Yeah.

AE: Yeah. Oh, so you've been there?

MR: Yes, I lived there for two years.

AE: Yup. I was there from '71 to '74.

MR: Ah hah!

AE: Those three years I went there several times, many times. One time I was there for thirty-five days, we had a fire onboard, and everything was fixed up there.

MR: Ahh. Yup.

AE: Yup. [37:14]

MR: Well, is there anything else to... add? It seems like, you know, one of the questions is...

AE: You could... we could talk for a week...

MR: Ah, yes...

AE: I mean, I'm a big, big talker, you know, so I can talk forever.

MR: Well, we can always get you another time too and we'll – we'll talk some more on the stage.

AE: I don't know what they'll...

MR: But, it seems... you've made a good life...

AE: Yes!

MR: ...you have a wonderful attitude about it.

AE: Yeah, yeah. It was life too...

MR: You're happy...

AE: You might as well sing, I mean you'll be sick going to the doctor all the time, you know? You have to be, you know, not really normal but you have to be a little bit healthy, happy, yeah...

MR: Ah, yeah.

AE: You know, I have a great wife. She has been... she's a great woman. I have two nice daughters. Sometimes they look like they – they are not even deserving of the parents that they have, but... [laughs] but then you realize that they are – they are wonderful daughters. They never gave us any – any problems, so... Both I and my wife, we are supposed to be sane, you know, and to be happy. The youngest one is seventeen year old now, and we get all pissed off, excuse my French, and aggravated... with her sometimes, but then we fall on our, you know, we fall on our own and say "wait a minute, what are we... are we bitching about?" With the world today? And even when – when I was seventeen year old? I would love to do this and to do that, and if I had a car, my parents gave me a car today, I would never be home. I would be – I would be... so, you know, we are blessed. Yes.

MR: Is it hard on them when you go out on a trip?

AE: Well, they say that it is but I think they all got used to it. This becomes, actually, I think this becomes healthy. If the... well, one thing I – I've – I've known because I've heard it since I was a kid, is that the fisherman, a good fisherman wife has to be able – and this is from the time where a woman still wear only skirts, and they used to say a fisherman – a good fisherman's wife has to put the pants on the day the man leaves. They used to say that back in the old country, meaning has to be the man of the house to raise the kids, to – to... you know, govern – govern, to manage the household, and all that. So, I think that if you are... if the family fisherman has... how do they say, competent, able wife in that sense?

MR: Mm hmm...

AE: I think it becomes a healthy routine. Going fishing, being away, letting everybody be what they are... everybody gets their sense of what they are supposed to be in the tribe, in the family... there is no bitching and complaining when the – when the man comes from work... you know, and – and it turns out to be healthy. [40:34]

MR: A number of people that I've interviewed, men, have said, in one way or another, just what you've said about needing a really strong wife. And I've interviewed some of the wives and children as well about... the effect of, you know, and it's been hard on them because... the men have been away and they've missed significant events, or, you know, there's been health problems, or...

AE: Yeah... oh yes...

MR: ...you know, family losses and things, but... but it does make everybody a stronger person.

AE: Yeah! Yes... I – it's... it's not great, it's not bad. I don't think it's bad. I mean I can – on my mother's side, every man was a fisherman, out... out fishing anywhere from... up to eleven months, sometimes. In the days there was no cell – no satellite phones. A telegram once in awhile and a letter when the boat or another boat go – would go to St. John's or St. Pierre.

MR: Mm hmm...

AE: That's all there was, so maybe two letters in – in ten, eleven, in nine, ten, eleven months.

MR: Wow...

AE: The – the woman had to be strong. Otherwise the marriage would fall apart, which in those days was not very common. There was in those days, I mean, in those days it was different because people... stuck together. You know, small towns, village type places. And people conversed more, talked more, were more solidare with ones anothers than we are in today's society. But the underlying thing is that the woman have to be strong. I mean, strong, they – they pretty much were the head of the household.

MR: Mm hmm...

AE: And that's what the... I think what keeps a family, our family, together. I mean, my wife manages all, everything that has to do with the house, the bill, I never wrote a check except maybe two or three times in my lifetime that she asked me to do that to – to pay this or that bill because she was busy or not feeling well, but no, maybe two times or three times in my life. But she manages the house completely, the money, I mean everything, she made us knew what the... what to think if I do this, or if I buy that, or such. But she's the manager of the house and I'm the manager of the business, you know?

MR: Mm-hmm.

AE: That's, I think, why it works, and I think also is the best way it works by what I see other fishermen friends of mine... you know, what goes on with them.

MR: Yeah... it's a partnership.

AE: Yes. Yes. Has to be a partnership. Yes. MR: Okay, well, I think we'll stop here.

AE: Okay.

MR: Just checking... this is wonderful, I will say thank you on behalf of the...

AE: My pleasure.

MR: ...Working Waterfront Festival, and I will see you on the food weigh stage [43:53].



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

Reviewed by Nicole Zador 11/15/2024