Marguerite Holloway: You just state your name.

Tim DeGroat: Tim DeGroat.

Marguerite Holloway: Can you tell me a little bit about how you learned to fish and who taught you?

Tim DeGroat: My dad taught me and his dad taught him.

Marguerite Holloway: How many generations have been fishing?

Tim DeGroat: Probably five.

Bob DeGroat: Four now, that we know of.

Tim DeGroat: four or five generations.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you have any memories of what it was like learning how to fish, or when you were real young?

Tim DeGroat: Well, we were all enthused then, a lot more than we are now, you know, it was something new. It was like an adventure. It was a lot of work but we enjoyed it.

Marguerite Holloway: Did everyone in the family learn how to fish?

Tim DeGroat: Yep.

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah?

Tim DeGroat: Um hm.

Marguerite Holloway: How kids were there?

Tim DeGroat: Well, all except my sister with the three brothers, they all learned, they all learned how to fish.

Marguerite Holloway: Did she participate in anyway?

Tim DeGroat; My sister? No. No, she didn’t participate at all.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh wow.

Bob DeGroat: The three of us and my father. My father just passed away.

Tim DeGroat: August.

Bob DeGroat: I shouldn't be talking.

Tim DeGroat: You can talk, as long as it's not a lot of background.

Marguerite Holloway: No actually, pull up a chair, that would be great.

Bob DeGroat: He can tell you more about it than I can.

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah, but it's nice if you both of you, since both of you

Tim DeGroat: You can hear him, that thing will probably pick it up.

Marguerite Holloway: I hope so. Yell.

Bob DeGroat: I can't stay long anyhow.

Marguerite Holloway: So you were 14 I think when you started?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, gee, I don't know.

Bob DeGroat: We've always been around it.

Tim DeGroat: No, I was a lot younger than that. I can remember my father used to tie me to the, tie a rope around me to keep me from going overboard because we didn't have life jackets.

Marguerite Holloway: So what did you do? Were you rowing or what did you learn how to do first?

Tim DeGroat: Row the boat, then we got a little motor and we worked the motor, the outboard motor. Oh yeah, years ago, I drifted with my father. I can still remember when I was a kid and my father and a lot of fellows used to drive right off that point up there. Used to row out, row out with a boat and 2 men and they would throw a drift net. And they would drift all the way to Haverstraw and come back. We didn't even have outboard motors then. You remember that, Bob? Years ago. They didn't have any, no modern equipment at all. Oars were the only thing they had.

Bob DeGroat: Used to see the old timers rowing up the river, of course, the boats were a lot smaller, they'd be full of fish, they'd be about that far from being under.

Marguerite Holloway: Really? About 4 inches?

Tim DeGroat: Something like that.

Bob DeGroat: 4 or 5 inches at the most.

Marguerite Holloway: Was that usually every season? Was there a lot of fish then?

Bob DeGroat: Yeah, there was a lot of fish and a lot of fishermen.

Marguerite Holloway: So how many people would fish off that point?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, god, I don't know. 20 or 30 fishermen.

Bob DeGroat: There was a lot of them, yeah.

Tim DeGroat: As a matter of fact they had a little way station where the tractor trailer used to back in and they would keep scales and ice and boxes in there and each fishing crew that came in they would weight up their fish, pack them in ice and load them on the truck right there. The guy would come and buy them right there.

Marguerite Holloway: So everyone would work out of the same

Tim DeGroat: Well most of the fishermen in that area would work right out of that, up at the corner there. Then later on the techniques got different and we got away from drift netting, we went to stakes.

I'm sure they've told you about how they did that. And then we got away from those and we went to anchor nets. We've been fishing anchor nets ever since. None of it's easy, but that was the easiest of the whole bunch, because you didn't need all that extra gear. You needed a lot of extra gear when you had fish poles. You know, had to use a lot of extra men, you had to use barges and winches and it was just a tremendous amount of work. So we got away from that also.

[TIME STAMP 5:00]

Marguerite Holloway: When did you do that, the stake netting?

Tim DeGroat: I think we did the stake netting starting around the 1950s, the late 1950s and 1960s, probably up to around the 1970s. And then we probably got away from the stake nets in the 1970s. Didn't we Al, somewhere around there?

Al: 1970

Tim DeGroat: When we started going to the anchor nets?

Al: Probably around 1977.

Marguerite Holloway: So how big a crew would it take to

Al: At least 4 guys.

Tim DeGroat: Most of the time 6, you needed a couple of me to run the boat and 4 men on the deck to handle those huge poles. Some of those poles are 65 feet long.

Al: We got with the 4 of us.

Tim DeGroat: We were a lot younger and stronger then too.

Al: The three of us and Howard, how many times we did that.

Tim DeGroat: But you had to be there to see it because we made it easier, the tide, we made the tide work for us. A 65 foot, not all, some of them were 50 feet and 40 feet, it's all according to the depth of the water. But the average pole probably weighted 600 pounds, the smaller ones.

Marguerite Holloway: The pole itself?

Tim DeGroat: The big around, they were probably 8 – 10 inches around on the bottom and 4 inches on the top and they were 55 to 60 feet, 40 feet long. You know, I'd say the average big pole weighed anywhere from 400 to 600 pounds a piece. Some of them were bigger, they were heavier and it would take that many men to handle it. And they were pushed into the mud at intervals of so many feet to allow for the spacing whatever size net that person happened to use at the time.

Marguerite Holloway: So how many people were stake netting out here?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, god. Cousin Sam couple probably answer that. Sam, how many people would you say in the height of the stake netting were fishing on this river, approximately, how many crews were fishing in the height of the stake netting?

Marguerite Holloway: Around here.

Sam: The Stony Point area?

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah.

Bob DeGroat; Every 1500 feet.

Sam: Every 1500 feet.

Marguerite Holloway: Really?

Tim DeGroat: 50 men maybe.

Sam: Yeah there was 50, sure.

Tim DeGroat: Probably 50, well, and there was plenty of fish also.

Marguerite Holloway: Everyone sort of switched from doing the drift netting to the stake netting.

Tim DeGroat: Well, not everybody, not everybody. There was a few people that hung on to the drift netting. As a matter of fact, my dad, he hung on to it until a few years before he died, he still liked to do drift netting.

Bob DeGroat: If he was alive right now he'd be talking about getting a drift net out.

Tim DeGroat: That's right because he loved drift net. [crosstalk]

Bob DeGroat: I don't even know how to start to go about doing it really.

Marguerite Holloway: So wait, so you didn't learn that before you did the stake netting you didn't learn the drift netting.

Tim DeGroat: No, he didn't somewhat, but it wasn't. I learned it, he learned it but it wasn't that convenient. You had to spend too much time on the water. You could go out here and haul your nets two men in an average day could haul 1200 feet of met with 3000 pounds of fish you'd going to be done in 4 hours. If you went on a drift net, gee you'd spend 4 hours out there just drifting down and another two hours drifting back and then when you come ashore you had to take care of all your fish and you had to rack your net up because they didn't have modern nets. In those days they had cotton linen. They laid them and left them wet lay in the boat trays and it heated up and they would rot on them. So a lot of extra work that we didn't like. We said there's got to be an easier way and we found an easier way.

Bob DeGroat: I was never around and drifting myself. I'm the younger one so

Al: I can remember when I was a kid used to help them and put them up on the poles every afternoon to dry. Had to bring them up.

Bob DeGroat: We done that here with the nylon nets.

Sam: The linen net knotted very easily, so what they used to do was take linseed oil and cut it with Naptha and they would soak the nets in that. That would make it a little bit better and it wouldn't heat

up and rot as fast in the boat. If they were going to leave the nets in the trays they'd go get ice and ice the nets down. Because it would build heat and rot.

Marguerite Holloway: So having it cold would preserve it longer? Keeping the nets cold would preserve them?

Sam: Yeah, keeping them cold would stop them from building heat.

Tim DeGroat: Spontaneous combustion.

Sam: Spontaneous, yeah, just like manure or anything when it lays it will just build heat, a linen net would do the same thing.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow. Did you ever see a net burst up.

Sam: No, it didn't burst in flame but just heated up, rotted, rot the material [crosstalk]

Tim DeGroat: That's why modern nylon and monofilament especially came out, you know, it's practically indestructible. Sunlight would be the only thing that would hurt the monofilament.

[TIME STAMP 10:00]

Tim DeGroat: It's almost completely transparent in the water. You've seen monofilament fishing line. You've seen the net too probably if you've been around any of the fishermen. When that's in the water it's practically invisible. But the drift netting got to be very laborious and spending a lot of time out there and the guys were watching the stake netters and the anchor netters catching twice as many fish in half the amount of time so most of the people got away from it. Old die hards stay with it because up to about 10 years ago I'd say 15 years ago there were still a few boats that drifted out here but then came all the channel markers, you didn't have the channel markers like you do now.

Man: Too much traffic.

Tim DeGroat: And too much boat traffic. And the channel markers were right down the middle of the rip where they some of them would run 2000 feet, shot up well, it wouldn't be one piece, but it would end up being 2000 feet of drift net. And you don't have the room now with the amount of traffic and the channel markers now. There never was channel markers there before. The river was wide open, you could go out in the deeper water.

Man: What's that guys name that you still drift?

Tim DeGroat: She knows, Edward Nack.

Man: Is that who it is?

Marguerite Holloway: Nack? No, he does haul seining.

Tim DeGroat: Oh, he does haul seining. Someone used to drift up there.

Marguerite Holloway: So, the fishermen who could see the anchor netters and the stake netters doing better, those people were fishing further down river.

Tim DeGroat: They fished all over, fished the whole river. Especially the Bay, the Haverstraw, Stony Point Bay is the shallowest part. That's where most of the stake netters go. You can't put nets or poles in deep water, you can but you'd have to have elaborate equipment and you'd need tremendous, you'd need telegraph poles to hold them, the tide would be so strong.

Man: You get water over 30 foot deep and you've got an awful job to put poles in.

Marguerite Holloway: How do you do it in this? I mean, how do you actually get the poles in here?

Tim DeGroat: Well you have a big long barge, probably 25, 30 feet long and x high and 16 feet wide. You'd lay the poles on either side and you'd center it to keep the weight distributed. And it was like a well with a roller and a chain around it. And several men would slide that pole out on that roll and the tide pressure would cause the pole to stand. You had to balance the pole and then you had an anchor line that ran out maybe 1000 feet one way and the boats would hold the nets up against the tide and the anchor line you would pull across. So once you got in the straight line where you wanted. You had the area that you wanted to be in according to the Corps of Engineers. You could roll that pole down and then the guys would jump in the mud. Then they had a measured line, like a 3/8ths piece of rope that they would pull the barge across to measure out for another pole to set it. You would get another pole ready, roll it out, get the tide pressure to hold it and put it up in the air and your guy would pull on the anchor and push up with the motor boat and line up so you would be in a straight line. Running with the river and the other pole. You didn't want them back. And then when they got the all set, they would drop another one in and they would put a chain with timber around it, 2 or 3 guys would get out and jump in the mud.

Marguerite Holloway: And jump up and down on that timber that was cross.

Tim DeGroat: And once that pole went in the mud, barring any problems, it was put in right, it would stay there. After a couple of days you needed a 10 ton winch to get it out, because the suction was such tremendous pressure. And that's how you went until you put however many poles you wanted.

Man: Depending on the area, when you put those poles in they would go anywhere from 8 to 14 foot in the mud, you would sink them in.

Tim DeGroat: The poles were all, I mean they were hand picked. They were straight, true and straight. They were all pointed on the bottom. They were all barked and we took draw knives and rasps and cleaned off all the knobs. When the rings went around these poles it was like a smooth flagpole, almost like a flagpole. You just didn't take a piece of tree and throw it in the mud. Everything had to be, and then the poles when you were done in the summer time after your fishing, you would bring the barge in at high tide, let the tide fall and take all those poles and push them all over in a big pile. Then you would have to put chains and cables around them and tie them all up. You would have to keep them in the water so they wouldn't rot from year to year. But you had to take, you couldn't just go cut new poles every year. That was quite a task.

Marguerite Holloway: Where did you go to get the poles?

Tim DeGroat: You went up into the mountains. A friend of ours would have a tractor trailer. We would go up one weekend. Get 8 or 10 guys together go up and cut a bunch of hickorys or oaks or maples,

whatever we needed. Nice true pole. We would cut them all down and just cut the branches off and then we would get a tractor trailer, load them all on

[TIME STAMP 15:00]

Tim DeGroat: bring them down here and everybody would work together barking them with draw knives and the rasp. Clean them all up, put points on them and measured and picked out select ones you wanted and that's how you fished with them.

Man: When he says poles, you're talking about trees. The poles had to be 50, 53 foot long. So you're talking about a 55 foot pole out of the woods you're talking about a tree.

Tim DeGroat: It probably weighed an average of 400 to the heaviest pole at least 800 to 1000 pounds. You always had the stoutest, the biggest pole to the outside because that's where your anchor went. That was your anchor pole. Deep just on the edge of the channel. You might be talking 32 feet of water. I mean you couldn't go any deeper than that unless you spliced poles together. Then you were asking for trouble. And you couldn't go any wider. The widest we ever spaced in that was 78 feet to hang an 80 foot net. If you went any further than that, you had so much tremendous tide pressure on the net it would pull the poles right over by the ebb tide.

Man: Remember Howard that time.

Tim DeGroat: He put out 100 feet and it just went whoosh right down the river. We had to repull all the poles and restick them.

Man: You can't put them that far apart.

Marguerite Holloway: He lost all the poles?

Tim DeGroat: Well he didn't lose them but but they pulled over. We had to go repull them and restack them, restick them back in the water. When this tides goes out here it's like dumping water out of a pitcher. I mean I don't know what the, how many miles an hour or knots but it really moves. Coming in one thing, but going out, the strength of that ebb tide running for 7 hours is a tremendous pressure. Like you taking a big pitcher of water and just dumping it right out all at once. It's just trying to get out of this river, just like that. Especially where it narrows down by Croton Point down there. We used to call that the Croton Triangle, the water down there would be terrible.

Man: When you go out there it pulled the undertow (crosstalk)

Tim DeGroat: There's not two men in this room in their prime on the strength of the tide that could get a net could pick up a net off the poles, that's how strong that tide it.

Man: You couldn't pull it up.

Tim DeGroat: You had to wait until the tide dropped off so much on the beach when it was flood tide. Set back so much on the beach that you went out there and still the first couple of nets were hard to get up. Because you had to go because you had a tremendous amount of fish. And if you waited too long, so everything was just ideal then you had a tremendous amount of fish then you would lose the tide and tide would go back the other way, start ebbing and you would lose all your prime fish. The rolled out

and they go right to the bottom, they don't have no bladder. And if you have a lot of junk fish, what we call junk fish wrapped up in there like catfish or carp and they would tangle up, they would just slow you down. So you had to really time everything. Everything had to be timed.

Marguerite Holloway: So the tide you could tell very well in here, on the shore exactly what the condition was going to be like out there?

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, pretty much, but the tide right now it's just starting to come in now. It's 2/3s of the way down. (crosstalk)

Marguerite Holloway: Did all the fishermen help each other going up and getting these big poles and putting them in and did all the different groups help each other?

Tim DeGroat: Well, no, the different groups had different crews. Everybody fished a little bit different. Everybody had their own, it was like a family thing at the time or good friends. And what would happen you'd take like 4-5 fishermen. Four or five crews used to fish out of here, families, they were always together. That's how that worked.

Marguerite Holloway: What were the names of those different families?

Tim DeGroat: DeGroats, Mackleroys, who else?

Man: Scandell.

Tim DeGroat: No, we're talking about the people that fished out of here.

Marguerite Holloway: Out of this boathouse.

Man: Chrystoli,

Tim DeGroat: Mulligan

Man; Burnsey

Tim DeGroat: Burns, yeah, John Burns. That's about it.

Man: What about the guy from West Haverstraw, did he fish here too, Mancuso?

Tim DeGroat: For a short time. Howard Jordan. But we would all get together and we would go up. We had friends of ours that had poles in the mountains on their own. Cut it on their property, get them all cut in one weekend. And then the next weekend we'd get a truck and bring them all down, dump them off down here and get to work on them, skin them. It's a lot of work.

Marguerite Holloway: How many would you have in your row? How many poles?

[TIME STAMP 20:00]

Tim DeGroat: Well, when we quit putting poles in I think we were putting in over 100 poles.

Man: Not in one row.

Tim DeGroat: Not in one row.

Marguerite Holloway: How many rows were you fishing?

Tim DeGroat: 20, 21 poles in one row, you put four rows in you're talking 100 poles.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow.

Tim DeGroat: 100 poles, you're talking probably 3 or 4 weekends. And you had to have, everything had to be just right. You couldn't have wind, you couldn't have rough water. You had to have the tide just right. I remember going out there one April, we got one pole in and the wind started blowing. And the next day it snowed. So we had to wait. We had to leave the barges and everything anchored there until a convenient time. Usually on a Saturday or a Sunday morning we'd get up before daylight and be out there at daybreak. Before the wind would come up. You try to work in calm water because you could get hurt. I've seen guys get their fingers almost taken off, get cut from the chain or something, trying to put the cable on the winch. You had to be very careful. You didn't want any rough water. Poles snap off.

Marguerite Holloway: Poles would snap off?

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, sometimes you'd have a pole around for years, you didn't see it but there'd be a crack that would be 10 feet down, a guy would be jumping on it, the pole would snap off, it knocked people overboard. That water's cold in April, March. About the time we were putting them in was in March. Stripers.

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah, before they were banned.

Tim DeGroat:

Marguerite Holloway: Was there ever any black market fishing for stripers?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, we wouldn't do anything like that. (laughter) Of course there was. Of course there was. I mean, anybody that said they didn't do it is either a saint or a liar.

Marguerite Holloway: Was there ever any? I mean I know there was a guy in Verplanck who was caught a couple of times by the game warden and fined a bunch. He had to actually go in to jail for one night or something. Did any of that happen over on this side.

Tim DeGroat: No.

Marguerite Holloway: It was much more quiet? Did everyone share a barge or did each one of the

Tim DeGroat: We all used the same barge.

Marguerite Holloway: Everyone who fished here? Or everyone up and down.

Tim DeGroat: There were a couple of crews that didn't work here but [unclear 22:40] we would loan or they would loan us, fishermen got along pretty good.

Marguerite Holloway: There are so many in this area, though, was there a lot of competition for markets? Or no?

Tim DeGroat: Yeah there was a lot of competition for. I've seen shad, he can verify it, Sam can, he shad fished longer than I did. I've seen roe shad down to 4 cents a pound, buck shad anything you want. I've

seen striped bass down to 5 cents a pound believe it or not. That's how bad it was. There was no market. Striped bass only got popular the last 20 years.

Marguerite Holloway: Before that no one fished for it commercially?

Tim DeGroat: They fished for it but come shad season they weren't worth a plugged nickel. When the ban was on it was cold weather then the price would go up but as soon as the season opened, everybody caught and the price would come down for striped bass. Same way with shad. We used to throw more shad overboard than we kept. As a matter of fact, to this day we probably still throw shad overboard

Marguerite Holloway: The bucks?

Tim DeGroat: Use different nets so we don't catch too many of the small ones, small as shad. There's a big demand right now for the roe shad, there's not too much of a demand for buck shad. Unless you sell it to a lobsterman. We freeze it for crab bait or they have some local markets to buy it.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you smoke it?

Tim DeGroat: We try to use nets now, the bigger net that the smaller buck shad will go through. You do get some. Years ago, you'd use a smaller net and you'd have boatloads and you'd just throw them overboard. People were starving and here we were throwing protein away. And not only that, sometimes you had so many roe shad, you had no room in the boat, you would sink. So you threw them overboard.

Marguerite Holloway: How did the fishermen set up markets so that they weren't competing with each other directly?

Tim DeGroat: Everybody used to deal with the Fulton Fish Market. You were more or less at the mercy of whatever price they set. So some of the fellows, including our crew here, we got away from them. We got private buyers. Then they got a set price. But you'd never get rich off of catching shad. Matter of fact, I'm to the point right now where I fish

[TIME STAMP 25:00]

Tim DeGroat: very little for shad.

Marguerite Holloway: Just a couple of weeks?

Tim DeGroat: Just a couple of nets just to keep my hand in.

Marguerite Holloway: So when was the last season that you fished in ernest?

Tim DeGroat: The last time we fished in ernest, really put it together, probably about 6 – 7 years ago, wasn't it? Before Joe died? From probably 1985 was the last time we really fished with a lot of equipment. We probably fished about 4,000 feet, 5,000 feet of net, ran about four boats. That was the last time. As a matter of fact, there's one of the boats, the tow boat we used to have, the "Queen of England" we used to tow the smaller boats behind it. We fished at Croton Point. But now you can't muster up a crew. You can't afford to, especially the way it is now.

Marguerite Holloway: Why?

Tim DeGroat: Stripers and then there're off shore. That off shore fishermen, down there in Jersey. They're stab netting before we even get them. That's a big problem. As a matter of fact, I got a letter from one of the biologists the other day, Kathy Hateela and they're investigating about putting a stop to that. Because they're a tremendous strain on our fish.

Marguerite Holloway: So what exactly is happening off of New Jersey?

Tim DeGroat: Off shore, off shore, they call it the off shore fishermen. They're catching our shad the spawning shad for this river, before we get a chance to catch them and it's dropped our catch off some places 75%.

Marguerite Holloway: And they just started doing this?

Tim DeGroat: They fish 7 days a week right on through the season. They don't have no lift period or anything. And the state's finally woke up, New York usually lags. And they've finally woken up to the fact that they've got to do something about it.

Marguerite Holloway: How long has this been going on?

Tim DeGroat: Well, since they lost, there was some other fish, commercial fish they were losing, Barnegat Bay is a big one. They've lost some other fish, probably the last five years, they're really starting to get into it big. The put out miles of net, fish 7 days a week. Take 30,000 pounds in one day. It'd take us a week to catch 30,000.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow. What was the most you ever caught in a season?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, I don’t know, 75,000 pounds. That would be a complete season, a big. That included buck shad.

Marguerite Holloway: So do you think New York State will actually do something about this?

Tim DeGroat: I doubt it. They may, I have no faith in New York State DEC whatsoever. Absolutely none. They know about it. In fact there's only 2 or 3 biologists that I'll even deal with. Kathy's one of them. You know, just to be courteous. Just to keep my hand in. As far as the DEC in New York State is concerned they're terrible.

Marguerite Holloway: Have you always felt that way?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, I have. I was a great believer in the DEC up there one time. In fact I worked with them. But every time they turn around and find something new that they can use against us and we teach them a little bit more, they'd use it against us.

Marguerite Holloway: Like what? Give me an example.

Tim DeGroat: I don't know what exampless, there's probably a lot of things that they've done as far as restrictions. They've put a lot of restrictions. They haven't taken any off. But we educate them. We educate them on the water. They don’t do anything about it. They haven't helped me one bit.

Marguerite Holloway: What did you teach them?

Tim DeGroat: Before 1975 and the PCB issue came up they didn't even know there was a river here. They couldn't care less. That's my feeling. That's the feelings of a lot of fishermen on this river. They've proven.

Man: Their biologists they were try to tell you that they were the smartest people in the world. They would take the striped bass and test them for the PCBs and would find varying numbers from 15 to 50 to 200 to 500 parts per million. It's a cumulative in the fish, it never leaves. The fish would just get worse and worse and worse. And then down the road, we'd find out that the fish are losing it. And then they'd say that the Food and Drug Administration said that anything over 5 parts per million in the fish was unfit for human consumption. And they said, once it gets down to 5 parts per million we'll think about opening the market.

[TIME STAMP 30:00]

Man: Well it got down to 5, it down to 4, it got down to 3, it got down to 2.

Tim DeGroat: They decided to lower it from 5 to 2 just about the time it got below 5. They lowered it to 2. [crosstalk] They say most of the fish are down below 2 now. They're using the fact that the PCBs have been in the mud and the silt since 1975 and they haven't taken it out of the river yet. And they were afraid that once they start taking it out there's going to be an upsurge. I guess they're going to mix up the water and PCBs and the fish are going to be consuming it again and it's going to bring the levels back up again. So they don't want to open the season to have to close it again. It's one excuse after another. Just to put my hand on one particular one, no, there's a lot of them. And they have a public hearing and they take you there and they show you all these kinds of slides.

Man: All slides have graphs.

Tim DeGroat: They're using terms, isocor this and 150 that. I don't want to hear that. I want to hear bottom line. When are we going to start fishing again. I've come to the fact that I'll never fish for stripers legally again.

Marguerite Holloway: You don't think

Tim DeGroat: No, I honestly feel that. And they're getting a tremendous amount of pressure from the sports groups. Don't open, we want it for ourselves. So-called sportsmen, SOS, Long Island Fishermen's Association. They know that 90% of the stripers on the East Coast, including the Chesapeake Bay are out of the Hudson River. They come up here with party boats. They come up here with party boats. Every spring. Now since they've put restrictions down in the Bay for 36 inch stripers. They can catch them here. Every spring you'll see boats come up here party boats up here catching the stripers.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh, because there's a different size.

Man: 18 inches up here against 36 down there.

Tim DeGroat: They all know that the stripers spawn here and that's why they're putting a lot of pressure on the State not to open. And you have to go through the FDA, and they're tough. You have to prove to

them, Food and Drug, you have to prove to them beyond the shadow of a doubt that any food product that you want to put on the market is clear of drugs or poison or contamiments. If you've ever worked with the Food and Drug Administration you know what I'm talking about. They're tough. You can get the OK from DEC, from the government, but the FDA says No we've got to evaluate it more, take more tests. Our fish are taken from the Hudson River to half way across the country, out to Wisconsin to be tested. We wanted to have them tests down here at Lamont Dougherty, one of the most reputable institutions in the country, in the world. And the State wouldn't accept it. They said they wouldn't do it the way that we want it done. We wanted to take it anyway that they want, the whole fish, or fillets. I mean, how many people eat the head, and the skin and the tail.

Man: You remember when they had the meeting and they had the Food and Drug Administration there and I asked the guy. I said how do you test these fish. And they said What do you mean? I said, When you get the fish, what do you do to the fish? He said, we grind it up and test it. I said, You grind the whole fish? He said, Yes. I said, Nobody eats the intestines, nobody eats the scales, nobody eats the bones, nobody eats inside the head the brains and things. I said why don't you prepare the fish, even leave the skin on if you want. Just cut the head and tail off, scale it and gut it out and test it that way. They never thought of that.

Tim DeGroat: They said one person might eat that other parts and if one person thinks that way, you've got to test it that way. Somebody might want to make soup out of it.

[crosstalk]

Man: No matter what we come up with they

Man: You can't catch them in a net but you can catch one a day for your own consumption with a pole and eat them. And there's nothing wrong.

Marguerite Holloway: So you could eat 30 of them a month.

Man: Yeah, that's what they're telling you, you can take one a day for your own consumption on a rod and reel.

Tim DeGroat: But not with a net.

Man: But you catch the same fish in a net, he's poison.

Marguerite Holloway: So they're continuing to send the fish out to

Tim DeGroat: I don't know the testing stopped. They said there was no reason as of last year, unless they're going to redo it again, there was no reason to test anymore.

[TIME STAMP 35:00]

Until they're only wasting money until 4 or 5 years they want to wait and see what happens. They found out that the PCB, well, they say PCB, I don't believe them. I personally don't believe that the PCBs are that big of an issue. I think they're just making a political issue out of it. I'm telling you, its these big fishing groups that are lobbying against us and the State say hey, look you've got a lot of clout and

fishermen forget about it they're only a handful and they wouldn't worry about it. We'll keep feeding them a line of baloney. I honestly believe that.

Marguerite Holloway: So you doubt the DEC thing there aren't really PCBs in there? Or that they're not dangerous.

Tim DeGroat: They're not as, there's not one documented case of PCBs hurting anybody. What it is it's the transformer oil or it has certain chemicals in it developed by Monsanto I guess back in the 1940s or whatever. And it's heavier than water. It works up through the food chain. I guess, it was always explained to me, the fish don't secrete it through their pores, they secrete it from eating up through the food chain. Once they leave the river it takes X amount of time. It's only in the fatty tissue, nobody eats the fatty tissue anyway. That's what they call it. And once they leave the river they become purified after X amount of time. I don't what's the given time. But they're already starting to open up the season back in Maryland, back in Delaware and out on the northern tip of Long Island. The Hudson River hasn't even been mentioned whatsoever. We're still on the banned list, we have been since 1975. They don't even want to consider us. I mean don't have nobody to fight. We've had people that give us a line of baloney that they're going to fight for it but we haven't had one person that did anything significant for this group in the Hudson River yet. Not one good thing yet. And I don't think anybody in this room can say that they have. They haven't done, not one good thing that's come out of any of this. They'll tell you, yeah, we're doing this, we're doing that but I haven't seen it down in black and white. I'm not back fishing. My equipment is still laying upstairs in the loft. I haven't used it. I can't use it. We can't even put a net in the water now. You can't put a net in the water. You used to be able to fish for sturgeon in the winter time. Fish for white perch. They got to the point now where you can't even put a net in the water between December 1 and March 15.

Man: Not only in the water, you can't even have one in the boat on the water. They catch you with a net in the boat on the water, whether it's in the water or not, you're in trouble. You cannot have a net in the boat and go on that river.

Marguerite Holloway: So they go for more and more limits on the time you can actually fish?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yeah, definitely, we used to fish all year round. You can't now. That's why the boats are up in dry dock. All the boats are in the dry dock. A couple are in the water, they're just there because they haven't been pulled out yet.

Marguerite Holloway: I thought sturgeon fishing was sort of starting up again, that people were like Tucker

Tim DeGroat: No I suggested putting a moratorium myself on sturgeon. They've depleted them so bad that there's hardly any sturgeon left. We go out here in the spring, we're lucky we catch 2 or 3 a week now.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you used to catch them commercially?

Tim DeGroat: Well, we tried a little bit but we used to just incidental fishing with the shad, we used to get all the sturgeon we wanted. All the sturgeon you want, any size you want.

Man: After the shad season from the shad season to probably the end of July is when all the big sturgeon come up. And very few people really when it for that. I think one guy over here in Verplanck.

Tim DeGroat: A few people do but with our jobs

Man: More 150, 200 pound sturgeon.

Tim DeGroat: Or it get's too warm.

Marguerite Holloway: Atlantic sturgeon or short nose?

Tim DeGroat: Round nose. Short nose are not allowed [unclear 38:55] long nose, sea sturgeon, Atlantic sea sturgeon not a lot of the round nose around anymore. We used to years ago, we used to take the round nose. Jimmy Carey and the boys, they've got pictures of the sturgeon, turn it over – is that Jimmy?

Man: Yeah. There's the caviar.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh, wow. So you never caught the sturgeon and sold the caviar.

Tim DeGroat: We did in a limited amount.

Man: You caught the sturgeon but you never took care of the caviar and sold it.

Tim DeGroat: Well, they did at one time.

Man: Over across the river, yeah.

Tim DeGroat: They did it here too.

Man: Did they?

Tim DeGroat: small, Jake used to. Don't bother no more. Like I said there wasn't that, at that time of year nobody wanted to bother with sturgeon. The water was warm and hot

[TIME STAMP 40:00}

Had to have everything refrigerated. The water was up to 75 degrees. You didn't get out there on every tide the fish would drown [unclear 40:08] was no good. So rather than destroy the fish we just didn't bother with it. I never really went in for that. We used to catch all the sturgeon we wanted during fishing season. All the sturgeon you want. I've seen us get 100 in a couple of days. No problem.

Man: The last big sturgeon we caught, you caught, and Jake, you had tied out here and we cut him loose, because nobody even wanted to skin it.

Tim DeGroat: That's right. That was a couple of years ago.

Man: Did you see the picture of the sturgeon up there?

Marguerite Holloway: Oh, wow. 112 pounds.

Tim DeGroat: And that was only a small one compared to some of the big ones. My father got one by himself it was [unclear 40:47] had one almost 200 pounds. Watchyamacallit in Piermont had one over 200 pounds.

Marguerite Holloway: But they used to be a by catch in the shad nets? You didn't fish specific nets for them.

Tim DeGroat: No, we didn't.

Man: Probably more sturgeon were caught in the winter time through the ice when they fished on the bottom than any other time of the year.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you do that?

Man: Oh, yeah.

Tim DeGroat: We used to do that years ago. That's before the power plant, back in the 1940s and 1950s. I've seen them cut through 26 inch ice out there.

Marguerite Holloway: Really?

Tim DeGroat: My father and my three uncles, right out here in the channel. Through 26 inch, they cut it with a hand saw, a big old ice saw. And catch sturgeon, put the sturgeon nets in and get big sturgeon.

Marguerite Holloway: How did that work? How did you dig through the ice?

Tim DeGroat: It was frozen solid. There was no boats.

Man: You just got a long trough like a ditch in the ice.

Tim DeGroat: Stretch the net.

Man: And put a line down on each side, on each end of the trench with a big rock on. Put it all the way down to the bottom and you had a ring around that line, tied the net on that, put small weights on and just let it slide down. And the tide would hold it out like a parachute.

Tim DeGroat: Put boards across the top of the trench with ropes to keep, it would rise and fall with the tide. You got a sturgeon, you put a sturgeon over your shoulder out there when you caught one, the nose would touch the ground, they were 5, 6 foot long, in the wintertime. Beautiful sturgeon out there. And I saw 26 inches of ice right out there.

Marguerite Holloway: I've never in my lifetime I've never seen ice that thick.

Tim DeGroat: My father, God Bless His Soul, and probably his father too. But my father I've seen him do it. He used to run a Model A Ford on that river, with chains on it. Drive across the river with chains on a Model A Ford, up there by the race course. They used to [crosstalk] you must remember that too, he's 82 years old.

Man: Yeah I was out there.

Tim DeGroat: Used to ice skate on the river all the way down to Sing Sing Prison, back then.

Marguerite Holloway: That's crazy.

Man: We had a sail like this going down, going about 70 miles an hour. [laughter]

Marguerite Holloway: You'd open your coats up?

Man; Yeah, like a sail boat.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh, that's great. [cross talk]

Man: Then we skated back. We didn't know how to hold our coats to get back by the wind.

Tim DeGroat: Couldn't tack, huh. [laughter]

Man: We didn't know how to do that to come back against the wind.

Tim DeGroat: The brickyards, you'd work in the brick yards when they were here 75 years ago.

Man: I worked in the brickyard, yeah. Good old days, boy.

Man: Yeah, the good old days.

Tim DeGroat: I remember it used to freeze over every winter.

Man: Three months that river was froze up,

Marguerite Holloway: Every winter?

Man: No, just certain times of the winters. This is going back, way back, 1917, 1918. That was cold weather though, hard, cold weather.

Tim DeGroat: The power plants.

Man: The power plants were dumping warm water in now. You only have to raise the temperature a few degrees. Especially when it's got salt in it. Here in 1920. I was 10 years old. [crosstalk]

Man: But you've got three power plants dumping water now. [crosstalk]

Man: You had to dig, everybody had to get a shovel. The only guys that was coming down was Hasting with a sleigh and a horse, bring some mattens and stuff like that, you know that milk. He had a farm up here in the back of J Street back there.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you ever sail on the ice, make sort of a

Man: Yeah, my father made a sail, ice boat, yeah, we were on it. A good amount of skates.

Man: Garrison and somebody else had one over in by Tippers. Those things, I tell you, they were fast.

[TIME STAMP 45:00]

Man: Ice boats. [crosstalk] He put a motor on his with a propeller. He'd go down that river 80, 90 miles an hour.

Man: Mack Ellis, you could see him go, holy god. Had an airplane motor in the back. You'd see him go down that river. He could fly down.

Tim DeGroat: I still remember my father with a Model A Ford out there driving across the river. The only time they had to worry is say like once in a week the *West Wind*, or the *East Wind*

Man: The East Win.

Tim DeGroat: The *East Wind* used to come up with a convoy and cut a path through to let the oil boats, old *Miss Esso*.

Man: They used to blast up here with dynamite.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, to open the channel.

Marguerite Holloway: To get through the ice?

Man: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: I remember one winter [crosstalk]

Man: It amazed me they never took a lot of pictures of the people on that river with ice roads.

Man: I remember one time up at Bear Mountain, just below the bridge, we had ice nets in. We were all out there and all of a sudden we hear the whistle and we look the *East Wind* is coming up the river and the ice was so heavy, he was just about making it, he'd have to stop and back up and hit it again. He wanted us to get off the ice and nobody left. And he cracked the ice and it would come together and the water would shoot in the air. We stayed out there. The ice was just so thick it was breaking in big pieces.

Man: Remember the ice when it went across the road here, about 40 feet high.

Tim DeGroat: It used to pile up in the corner.

Marguerite Holloway: So you have pictures of the ice?

Man: Ice age, yeah. The ice age we call it. Oh, yeah, 40 feet high. My mother's standing out there.

Tim DeGroat: That point up there, the ice would be coming down with the tide and the wind. It would come to shore, it would start plowing up and plowing up and the tide would just keep pushing it up over the top and the wind. And the ice would pile up and come out on to the roads. 40 feet.

Man: Remember the night Schermerhorn's saloon burned down? It was a bitter cold night. The water main coming under the bridge up there froze, couldn't get any water out of the hydrants. And the firemen came and couldn't get any water out of the river because the ice was piled up to about 25 or 30 feet high. Just had to stand there and watch it burn.

Man: All the houses [unclear 47:47] was a part of burned right to the ground.

Tim DeGroat: Couldn't get water.

Man: Couldn't get no water.

Man: The main was froze and the river was piled up. I remember that. I remember it too because I lived [crosstalk]

Tim DeGroat: Grassy Point.

Man: First house.

Marguerite Holloway: That little point there is called Grassy Point.

Man: Yeah, I was born in Grassy Point. I was born 82 years ago. [crosstalk]

Man: [unclear 48:15] first year I got married.

Tim DeGroat: I remember.

Man: Like it used to be this weather is no comparison to the weather we had in the 1920s, 1928, 1929, 1930.

Marguerite Holloway: So it's not just the power plants, it's also the reaction of the climate.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, the climate's changed.

Man: Seems to be getting warmer every year.

Man: 1957 and 1951, 1952.

Tim DeGroat: I can remember 1947, wow, snow, we got snow on the ground until April. [crosstalk] I remember they'd measure the ice 26 inches. What they used to do is cut the ice out with a big saw. They'd pick it up with a tong and they'd stack it up in front of the hole, from the north and act as a windbreak. And I've seen the ice stack the ice up like that to keep the wind off them. They'd come each day and take an ax to cut the skim ice off so they could pull the net. People, they used to catch so many sturgeon they used to send them up to Albany packed and they got the name Albany Beef. They were so popular. And all it is is pollution and people over fishing and off shore and guys going up and getting the females with the spawn in them. Because the DEC called me and they asked my opinion on it here just a couple of months ago. I said I think you should put a moratorium on it. As much as I'd like to catch sturgeon, we're going to kill them, going to deplete them all if we don't do something here. I said, but don't just put it on and forget about it. That's what the state usually does.

Man: In the wintertime when they caught the sturgeon through the ice like that they didn't bring them ashore. They'd stack them up like cordwood on the ice and then cover them with snow

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They had piled up there and most of the time, the poor people around, they'd come out they'd give them fish, something to put on the table, you know. A lot of people thought of sturgeon as a lowly fish and let me tell you, they're some mighty fine eating fish. There's no bones and it's nice and pink inside. I would say it's one of the better eating fish. That's another thing too that how bad, I don't know, for lack of a better word, how people have desecrated our river and our name. Today you offer somebody a fish right away they want to know where it came from in the river, and ask "Are you sure there's nothing wrong with it?" I mean, media put a bad taste in everybody's mouth.

Marguerite Holloway: Because of the pollution.

Man: All because of that bass PCB.

Tim DeGroat: Because of the PCB. Do you remember the year [crosstalk] that the DEC

Man: That asbestos I worked around asbestos for what, about 40 years and it never bothered me. I bought a house [crosstalk]

Man: We've got more ocean fish up in this bay right now than there ever was. You come out here, you catch snapper, blues, you catch blue fish, wheat fish. What was that last fish we got?

Tim DeGroat: Flounder.

Man: You're getting fluke. The little grouper we caught.

Man: Things that are around the shark, what do you call them?

Man: The pilot fish.

Man: The pilot fish. The ones that follow the sharks and hook on to the shark [crosstalk]. The little tuna family, the little skip jacks. The little yellow ones.

Tim DeGroat: Amberjacks.

Man: Amberjacks, we caught them.

Man: And then you caught the oyster cracker.

Man: Oyster cracker, yep.

Marguerite Holloway: Were there always sea fish up here or

Man: There was a few but not like there is lately.

Marguerite Holloway: Why is there so many now?

Man: Because the river's cleaned up again.

Man: The river's getting cleaned up good.

Tim DeGroat: You'll find out that if you have a dry season and the salt works its way further upriver you get more and more ocean fish. What I started to say before, one year I can't remember 5, 6, 7 years ago the DEC put an article in, just as the crabbing season started. They put an article in about the heavy metals and the crabs. And it knocked a lot of the customers. And come to find out that that test had been taken when? 1978? Or 1980? Well Bob Gabrielson got on the horn about that. He called the newspaper to tell them that they had one hell of a nerve waiting just during the season to come out with that. He wanted a retraction if they didn't have proof. Since then

Man: The test had been years and years ago

Tim DeGroat: they haven't mentioned anything.

Marguerite Holloway: Good for him.

Tim DeGroat: I mean the tests had been taken years and years before that. And they used that old test.

Man: You always had some young reporter that thinks he's God Almighty.

Tim DeGroat: Well, it was a young reporter and he got right on the case.

Man: Want to make a name for himself, he puts a story like that in there and then it's all, everything about it is wrong.

Tim DeGroat: That's why we usually don't give out interviews. That's why, when I didn't return your call, I asked my wife, I said, I don't really want to get involved anymore. Because I give out information and it just seems like repetitious. I've given this interview before. It's different way, different people talk. I've done it 20 times at least. Nothing good has ever come out of it so something maybe for your education, fine, I don't mind doing it.

Marguerite Holloway: Well hopefully, this is in the museum in Kingston, other people will go listen to it as well. Other people can learn about it.

Tim DeGroat: Well, it's a grand old river.

Man: Did you ever hear anything more from Cronin about that movie with your dad in it?

Tim DeGroat: All I heard was that they were editing it and when it was done they were going to send me a copy or bring me a copy. I'm sure I'll get it sooner or later. It's a grand old river. I've lived on it, fished on it all my life. I think if I had to move away from here and I couldn't be by water I wouldn't know what to do. I mean, I love the water. I probably love it as much as anybody. I've spent my whole life on it, probably will die on it. You never get rich off of it. We enjoy ourselves on it. We make a few dollars here and there and we really enjoy. I've found out lately, the last 10 years or so, maybe less, that the river really, really was being abused, it was being abused by pleasure boaters. And I blame, again and again I blame the state. They don't educate these people.

[TIME STAMP 55:00]

You can go buy a boat. There's been a big outburst of boats in the last 10 years. We have the biggest marina on the East Coast, there's gotta be 2000 boats in this marina at one time on the shore. I think they've got berths for 1600 and you really realize we're commercial fishermen, we fish commercial crabs in the summer time also. We have to for the most part on weekends we have to go out on the water, get our work done and get the hell off the water by 9:00 a.m. or you're literally taking your life in your hands.

Marguerite Holloway: Why?

Tim DeGroat: [crosstalk] They have no respect for you whatsoever. They're not educated. They practically run over you. We keep bunker nets out here for bait. We catch bunkers 7 days a week in the summer time and keep our freezers full for crab bait. And we have to go out sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, Bob and I or one of the other fellows involved. And it's scary.

Man: The sailors.

Tim DeGroat: Not just the sailors. Let's give credit where credit is due, all of them.

Man: I'm talking about the sailboaters at their bouy right there where we have the bait nets and they keep circling and circling. It's scary when you see one of those big boats bearing down on you.

Tim DeGroat: When you put nets out there, you have buoys on the nets. Probably every 20 to 25 feet. And these people do not know that they're not supposed to take a sailboat or another boat between those buoys and they just run right between them. It cut the buoys off,

Man: Cut the lines, cut nets.

Tim DeGroat: And I blame the state. The state has not educated these people. They're getting the revenue in from these people for licenses and registering the boat [crosstalk] I mean we, last year we had to register our boat, we were threatened with fines. I've never registered my boat, I defied the State of New York. We finally registered out boats after 30-some years. I'd never registered my boats. So they made it so miserable that the sheriff patrol and the state police and whatever were going to ticket us and fine us and were going to do this and so we finally got our license [crosstalk]

Man: These buoys out here don't go between the boats.

Marguerite Holloway: So why don't they tell people what they should do on the river before they give them the license?

Tim DeGroat: Who's they?

Marguerite Holloway: The state, why don't they

Tim DeGroat: Why don't the state do a lot of things? They're making money, sweetie hand over fist. They don't care. They don't care about us, we're only a few fishermen. They'd be glad the day when we're not out there no more. They'll sigh a sigh of relief, thank god we don't have them bothering us no more. That's just the way I feel that they feel about us. The State of New York. It's a terrible thing to say but that's the way they feel. I honestly believe it. The State of New York takes in this money for registering boats. I defy you to find a place within a half hour, 45 minutes drive of here where you can launch a boat at a state launch site in the Hudson River. Now they have launch sites up the river further. They have launch sites on all the lakes in the Adirondacks. Go out on Long Island. A buddy of mine, his father worked for the State of New York at a launch site in Freeport, Long Island. Parking lot, buildings, rest rooms and the whole bit. But here on the Hudson River with all the boats they have no launch site. If you want to launch a boat you have to go to a boat club and pay through the nose. And then they really don't want you because they don't have the parking area. The State doesn't do anything about it. You can imagine at any time on a Sunday morning, or a Saturday morning when they have a sailboat race between Croton and Stony Point a hundred sailboats, anywhere from 18 to 30 feet long. Big sailboats. Double, triple sails. Then inbetween you've got these little 19, 18 foot runabouts. Then you've got the damn ski boats. In and out like bumble bees all over the place. That's literally what it sounds like. I love to come down here on a Sunday morning when it's quiet and you've got on these clowns running around. Everybody has the right to enjoy the river but give me a break. You know, I've been out there 35, 40 years, I don't make all that kind of garbage. And they throw trash all over the place. And get a

pole and raise hell with them. [cross talk] Why the hell you throwing trash on my river. They don't get educated. You'd think the marinas with all the money that they're taking in, someone would give $50, $60, $100, $200 a foot. You'd think they'd provide them with waste recepticles, little garbage bags like they used to do and say, hey look. When you go out boating today, take it, put all your trash in here.

[TIMESTAMP 60;00]

Educate these people. They don't care.

Marguerite Holloway: Because they're not connected to the river anymore.

Tim DeGroat: They couldn't care less. Weekend warriors, that's it sweetie. That's all they are, weekend warriors. They don't even know a river is there until come the weekend when they get off their $100,000 job and get in their half a million dollar yacht and run out here and run up and down the river and throw their beer cans and have a good old time. Next week it'll be here, don't worry about it.

Man: The parents come over to party on the boat, here, maybe they're not gone yet. They come over the party on the boat. Every one of their kids they buy one of these little inflatables with an outboard motor on it. These kids are out on the river here, running around, playing chicken. Running at one another and just missing one another and just bouncing over the waves. No life preservers or anything on.

Tim DeGroat: We're the outsiders. They see a fishing boat coming up they're wondering, what is that. They if they see you out on the nets and you say something. They say are you legal, are you doing something legal or illegal. They have the nerve to ask me if I'm doing something illegal.

Man: Who?

Tim DeGroat: These boaters.

Man: Are you kidding?

Tim DeGroat: They've done it to me many times.

Man: You've got engines going over my nets and cutting them.

Tim DeGroat: You raise hell with them about infringing on your area and they say well are you out here legally.

Marguerite Holloway: How over time did it change? I mean because it used to be that everyone knew the fishermen and knew the river. Why did it change?

Tim DeGroat: When boating became popular and marinas. I'll tell you, dear, you can stand out on this dock and you can see them within eyes range and 360 degrees there's at least 14 or 15 marinas within 15 miles of us. The one marina here there's 2000, you're talking 15, 20 thousand boats. Thank God they don't come out all at once, you could walk across them. You can see them over there. See them over there, the boats over there.

Man: And this time of the year most of the people have taken their small boats home.

Tim DeGroat: The harbor at Singapore they're all on there at one time.

Man: Just get a pair of glasses, look around, all around you'll see them.

Tim DeGroat: And every one of them is out of there. I mean, god bless them, I don't have nothing against that. But the State does nothing to educate them. Say, hey look, you know there are fishermen out there and they do have certain rights. I have as much right if not more right as anybody out there. If I declare it once in a while. I mean I get hot on some of these boaters. I mean use little four letter words once in a while I get so aggreavated. I make sure there's not women or children on board. That's how mad they get you.

Man: The speed boats, huh.

Tim DeGroat: We had, you can ask Bob, oh, Bob's gone now. We have traps down the river. We have traps in certain areas.

Marguerite Holloway: Crab traps?

Tim DeGroat: Crab traps.

Marguerite Holloway: When do you start fishing for crab?

Tim DeGroat: In May. We start in May and we run through October. We'd go down to the river now, we were buzzed a couple of times by one boat. These guys had a few beers and they were buzzing us. I got real indignant, I was about to take a I had a piece of pipe in the boat and I told them you come by one more time I'm going to throw it at you. That's how mad I got.

Marguerite Holloway: Buzz, you mean just coming.

Tim DeGroat: Coming as close as they can to us.

Man: Half in the bag, you know these guys are nuts out there. They had a couple of crack ups last year down there. Guys got hurt ran into one another. Going so fast they hit one another.

Tim DeGroat: Not a year goes by that somebody don't drown off one of those boats, or one don't catch on fire. Or one of them sink. You don't have to have any kind of a certification or license at all to drive, to own a boat and drive it out there except for registering it. I have to have a licenses, I have to make sure I'm up to date, I have to have all my flares. I have to have. And the river patrol, they go crazy, they go crazy out here on the weekend trying to keep up with people.

Man: You ask why don't these people know about the fishermen. If you go by there in the summer time and look at the cars in the parking lot, you'll see Jersey, a lot of Jersey cars. They don't live near the water, they know nothing about the fishermen.

Tim DeGroat: I still blame the State of New York. They're 100% guilty. They don't educate nobody. We tried at one time at one of the meetings that had DEC, had law enforcement there, had a biologist there. And we were talking about fishing and marking our nets on the water so they could be distinguishable. I said fine. We'll come up with an international color, we'll have orange buoys with orange flags. They

stick out, we've got high fliers. So we started doing it. But you have to put it in your syllabus when they register, to let people know that those are fishing buoys. They didn't even do that.

[TIME STAMP 1:05:00]

They don't know some of them. You go in the boat clubs and I bet you can't find a map like that. You see the map of the river?

Marguerite Holloway: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: It shows the depth of the water, it shows all the rock piles and things. There's a rock pile right off this point. We've seen boats go by here at low tide in the summer time.

Man: Wide open.

Tim DeGroat: Wide open with skiiers on the things. Hit that rock pile and tear the motor right off the back of the boat. No knowing it's there.

Man: It should have a heavy buoy out there.

Tim DeGroat: We had markers there, they took the markers out that used to mark that. They go between the markers when they put them up. They're not educated, the general public. I don't begrudge anybody enjoying themselves. They should enjoy themselves, it's for everybody. But let's there should be a limit to everything.

Marguerite Holloway: What happens during shad season? Are they buzzing around at that time or is it too early?

Tim DeGroat: When it's real early they made fiberglass boats now, most of them don't even come out of the water. They have a bubbling system there now where if we did get cold weather it wouldn't freeze anyway. So a lot of them like to try their boats out in the early spring, the first time they're out. We go out there fishing and at one time we were the only boats on the river in the shad season. For two months we had it all to ourselves before anybody. Now, as soon as the ice is gone or warm weather, they're out there. And they're buzzing you from the beginning to the end.

Man: And you think windsurfing is a warm weather sport? Not on this river. They put the rubber dry suits, not a wet suit, dry suits and they're out there windsurfing.

Tim DeGroat: Oh, that's another new thing, besides the little bumble bees out there they've got the sail fin. Every spring we picked a couple of them out there completely exhausted. Can't get out of the water they're so exhausted from the cold water.

Marguerite Holloway: So you help them.

Tim DeGroat: They come and I'm not going to turn somebody away. I'll tell you what, I've come to the point though in the summer time, If you are out there and you're in a pleasure boat and you break down and I ride by you and see you and you're not in danger of being hurt or drowned or anything, I just say, "Bye" I won't even stop. So help me god,, I will not stop because everybody goes right on by me. I way well you bow, if it's not a life threatening situation out there. Naturally, I'm not an ogre. But if I see

somebody out there broke down, hey buddy I say Hey pal, bye! And I keep right on going. And those people have made me like that. I will not stop and help nobody. And believe me, they break down every year. I could make a fortune pulling people in. Some of them I pull in they wouldn't even say thanks. "Okay buddy, see you later." So I don't go out of my way anymore. I mean if I see a life threatening situation naturally I help. But otherwise, I don't help nobody. Because they don't help me.

Marguerite Holloway: When did this traffic start getting so bad?

Tim DeGroat: Probably the last 10 years it just built up. Since boating has become so popular.

Man: It's been building up here, since they opened up this place.

Tim DeGroat: Since the boating become popular.

Man: That's what brought this up here in 1978 started here. The first sail boat came in in 1978. I got a picture of it coming in. The first boat, sailboat. That was a big hole there. I used to work down in that hole. Digging clay. They reason they dug that out, they pumped it out and they built three big concrete cassions for the pier that burned down in 1947. It cost over 10 million, 300 thousand dollars. Then they flood it and they dug it out and they dumped it out under Bear Mountain Bridge. And they went out and then the Tappan Zee Bridge. They did the same thing, they back filled it, pumped it out and built 10 cassions for the Tappan Zee Bridge. And then they sunk them. And then some big guys seeing this place right away, they wanted to know who owned it. Well of course, Haverstraw owned it. They went right down and seen them, he says do you want to rent it out for so many years. Every 10 years they pay so much, every 10 years. They've got at least 150 years.

Marguerite Holloway: Who owns this land that the boathouse is on?

Tim DeGroat: The company I work for. U.S. Gypsum does. I lease it off them.

Marguerite Holloway: Are you the only family still fishing out of here?

[TIME STAMP 1:10:00]

Tim DeGroat: I have a couple of my friends fish out of here, but for the most part it's family. I have one, we have two friends that fish out of here. Most part it's family. Stop to think, you know, years ago, we could have bought it for almost nothing and thought aw, it'll always be there.

Man: Then all of a sudden the whole marina and part of the swamp that your father could have bought.

Man: $108,000 they wanted for 32 acres.

Tim DeGroat: We thought, well it'll always be there, we don't have to buy it, we'll always have a place on the river and then all of a sudden it was gone.

Man: It's worth a billion dollars now, the whole place here put together here.

Marguerite Holloway: Fishermen, I mean, especially in this area have been really well organized. I mean with Bobby Gabrielson and being very outspoken against a lot of the State's activities. But it hasn't made a difference.

Tim DeGroat: No. We have organizations, we have lawyers. We have people that are working for us all the time. But the State, let's face it, the State has a staff of lawyers that're on payroll. They just keep rolling on and on. I mean they can outlast you. We'll run out of money.

Man: They can keep it going until you're dead.

Marguerite Holloway: When did the organizations start?

Tim DeGroat: 1975.

Marguerite Holloway: With the vets. And did everyone just talk to each other and say we should do something or was it someone who actually

Tim DeGroat: We all got together and said, hey look, we've got to do something and there's strength in numbers and little did we know that no matter how many numbers we had the State was always one step ahead of us.

Marguerite Holloway: When you worked with the DEC what did you do?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, we'd just take samples. Fish samples and stuff.

Man: And take them out in the boat and teach them.

Marguerite Holloway: What did you teach them about the river that they were able to use against you later?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, I don't know, just a general education. Like I said, before 1975 it wasn't just myself, it was a general term I was using. A lot of the people they would learn little tricks of the trade. How to use a net. The State of New York didn't know. All they were fresh water lakes. They didn't know the river was here until someone, oh, there's a river there after 1975, yeah, there's a river there. And then they started to use it against us. Like I said if I had my way I wouldn't even live in the State of New York and I've lived here all my life.

Man: Yeah, the old Hudson's a beautiful river. What a beautiful river.

Tim DeGroat: I'd be up in Maine right now.

Man: That's beautiful. I've been trying to get him to go to Maine. He will love it up there.

Tim DeGroat: Because I think our days are numbered on the river.

Marguerite Holloway: Are there any young people who want to learn about

Tim DeGroat: No

Marguerite Holloway: Why?

Tim DeGroat: Because there's no need to. To go through what we're going through. My son does, somewhat. My oldest son, but my younger son says "You're crazy Pop"

Marguerite Holloway: What is your older sons name?

Tim DeGroat: Timothy.

Man: I commercial fished with my father and my grandfather. From the time I was a little kid my grandfather used to tie me to the seat of the boat so I wouldn't fall overboard. And then I commercial fished up until I got married and a few years after that, I stopped in like 1958, 1959. I never commercial fished after that. Those last years that I fished we would catch shad. You never knew what the market price would be. They'd send you the blue sheet which gave you the prices or the green sheet. And when you sent fish into the market by then the price had changed. You had to buy your boxes, we put them in wooden crates. You had to buy the lids, you had to buy the ice, you had to pay for the trucking down and you had to pay $1.00 or $1.25 a box to get them unloaded down there. And sometimes you would find out that it would cost you more to ship the fish than you got for them. You were losing money. So not only losing money, you put all your time in for nothing. So really it.

Marguerite Holloway: Is that when people started dropping out?

Man: Oh, a lot of fishermen dropped off then.

Marguerite Holloway: When was that? That was in 1959.

Tim DeGroat: I don't know. In the late 1950s yes, 1957, 1958, 1959. Things got better in the 1960s. We almost quit fishing in 1967.

Marguerite Holloway: Why?

Tim DeGroat: The fish, the catch was way down. It was terrible. In 1968 they rebounded back to one of the best years I ever had. Between 1965 and 1967 for some reason or other the fish, I think they go in cycles. The catch was down to gee, a tremendous amount in the fall 90%. We didn't know what to think, what was going on. I don't know what at the time what was going on what other factors were involved. But 1968 they bounded back.

[TIME STAMP 1:15:00]

And they've been getting better ever since. I've see 12,000 pounds in this boathouse in one day. One catch 12,000 pounds.

Man: I think what we should have done when we were commercial fishing, we should have kept a diary. I mean

Marguerite Holloway: Of all the catch?

Man: Of the catch each year and how many fish we caught, how the conditions were and everything. Because those fish say 1950 you had a good run and a good year for roe shad then you could figure that those fish just spawned then. The bucks would be back in 3 years. The roes would be back in 4, so you would know pretty much, that 1954 was going to be another peak year. And you could put more effort into it. And then maybe 1955 was a bad year, so you could figure that 1959 wasn't going to be a real good year. But we just never kept a diary.

Marguerite Holloway: Did any of the fishermen, or the old timers sort of know that, or did they remember that and could they predict whether a year was going to be a good year or a bad year?

Man: Some of them tried to. It really, if you didn't keep records you couldn't keep a close watch on it, you know.

Tim DeGroat: I can do it myself. You see a good run of fish, a good school of fish, there's no guarantee barring any what's going to happen, why kind of spawning was going to go on and how many fish there were going to be. They do it more accurate today but we used to be able to say, gee this was a good year, we got x-amount. We always keep track of our weights. Compared to last year it was pretty good and there's a lot more roe shad, and a lot of younger roe shad, you could tell by looking at that. Well, you know darn well that in 4 years from now, barring any unforeseen problems that there was going to be a good year. That's the way it was since about 1975 on. It's been just better and better and better until now this introduces off shore Barnegat Bay fishing, last year my catch went down 75%. The year before that I noticed it dropped and then last year it was 75%. I mean it was unreal. I said hey, I'm not going, I mean we were getting stripers like you wouldn't believe in the spring now. We get unreal since the recovery coming back, you want to see this, you wouldn't believe it.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you think, some of the fishermen upriver think that some of the stripers are perhaps feeding on the young shad and that's

Tim DeGroat: Why not? Sure. Why not they feed on alewives, they feed on herring, they feed on bunker, why not feed on the shad.

Man: There were so many small striper bass in the river this year. I'm talking about fish from 5, 6 inches up to 10 or 11 inches long. We could walk on the dock here and throw a slice of bread overboard and the water would boil with stripers. The water would boil, 3, 4 inch stripers, 3, 4, 5 inch stripers.

Man: And get off the bread too.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, the smaller ones, say 3 inch, would come up through a hole in the bread and lay on top, flip around and swim off. And they'd devour a slice of bread in about a minute, so many young stripers. We would throw it out there for ducks and they would come around the ducks feet, that's how many stripers. The same way with shad, you take in September every year. We were down there crabbing last year in September, the shallow water where the tide was running slow. The water was silver with the little shad jumping out of the water.

Man: That would be in September.

Tim DeGroat: So many young shad. Now what happens to them out there, when they come back there's no guarantee we're going to catch them. And I'll tell you, after seeing last year, if they don't do something about them I don't want to shut them down, but they've got to have limitations. We've got tremendous restrictions on us. Can only catch so many, you have to have a 36 hour lift period. You can only use a certain size mesh net. I mean we get well monitored during the fishing season. They come out of the walls the game wardens. You never see them all year round.

Man: Rockland County is one of the smallest ones and two years ago they had 7 wardens.

Tim DeGroat: Practically one game warden for every fishermen at one time here. Out on Long Island they could care less.

Man: At one time, well going back into the late 1930s and 1940s this river was quite a fishery in November with the large eels.

Marguerite Holloway: And that closed down also right?

Tim DeGroat: You can't touch an eel any more down on the river.

[TIME STAMP 1:20:00]

Tim DeGroat: We used to go down to. We used to go to Sheepshead Bay down lower end of Brooklyn and catch horseshoe crabs. Femaies for bait. Bring them home, keep them alive for as long as we could and we would chop them up and put them in fish boxes and store them in the freezer and it paid to pay freezer space to have that bait for November for eeling.

Marguerite Holloway: And there was a big market for eel?

Tim DeGroat: There was a big market. All we could catch, yes, Fulton Market was only too glad to get them.

Marguerite Holloway: How much did you get?

Tim DeGroat: Because it was close to the holiday seasons way into December a lot of the Italian people for the holidays always wanted eels. I don't know whether they kept them in cold storage or what. We did a lot of the eeling in November and December.

Marguerite Holloway: What did you get for eel?

Tim DeGroat: Well, back then it was 15 – 20 cents a pound. And then the closer you got to the holidays it would go up to maybe a quarter or 30 cents. That was good money, back in the early 1940s. That was real good money.

Marguerite Holloway: What else? So shad, sturgeon, eel, crab,

Tim DeGroat: striped bass and even white perch in the wintertime.

Marguerite Holloway: Where would you sell the white perch?

Tim DeGroat: Locally. People would come Oscar Hansen in Tompkins Cove had a steady flow of customers that would come in for white perch. He used to clean them for the people. And white perch is a very good eating fish.

Marguerite Holloway: Are there a lot of perch in the river still? White perch?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yes. A lot of white perch in the river now. In the wintertime especially. We used to fish through ice at Bear Mountain for them. And you always fished five fathom down to the top of the net, which would be 30 feet to the top of the net. You were fishing in 100 feet of water up there and the same the white perch always traveled somewhere between 30 and 40 feet down. The water temperature must have been right. You'd go up there and put one net down say 5 fathom and put the other net down 10 fathom and the 5 fathom net would be loaded with fish. And the 10 fathom net wouldn't have enough fish in to feed half a dozen people.

Marguerite Holloway: That's wild.

Tim DeGroat: They travel with the thermals.

Marguerite Holloway: So did your father teach you all these things, like where to get them?

Tim DeGroat: Yes he did.

Marguerite Holloway: What else did he teach you about things on the river and the fishes behavior?

Tim DeGroat: We used to haul seine. We had a 1000 foot seine and we used to haul for striped bass.

Marguerite Holloway: Where?

Tim DeGroat: Stony Point Bay. Mostly up against Stony Point Battlefield. We would go up and watch as the tide would be rising. You would see the stripers feeding off Grassy Point going in toward Stony Point Bay and as the tide progressed and got higher the fish would be further. And you would get to know just where the fish would be at a certain time of the tide. Like the school would be traveling and feeding at a quarter tide they'd be starting inside Grassy Point. At half tide they'd be maybe against the back end of the bay and at three-quarter tide they'd be up, what we called the Acme, the old Acme brickyard hitting onto the battlefield. And at full tide they'd be out at the end of the Battlefield going out into the deeper water. And you could go by the tide and know where you were going to see the fish. They would be running the bait to the top and you'd see them jumping on the water. You knew where they would be.

Marguerite Holloway: How many people did it take to work the seine?

Tim DeGroat: We used to do it with three people. It's a lot of work. But we used to make the tide work for us. We would throw, the bay is like a horseshoe and the tide would be running from south to north and would push the net towards the Battlefield. So we would throw the net out so the tide would more or less push it in to us, so three of us could do it.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you have winches?

Tim DeGroat: No, all by hand. 1000 foot seine. We had 600 foot of ¾ inch rope on each side to pull. One man would pull both bottom lines and one guy on each side on the top lines. Just the three of us.

Marguerite Holloway: One person to do the bottom lines?

Tim DeGroat: One person would put the two bottom lines together and pull them in. Because the tide was pushing it toward you. It wasn't that easy. You had to work at it, you know. Once in a while you'd pull in a snapping turtle almost in your lap and everybody'd jump, you know. We got a lot of fish.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you look forward to going out and fishing?

[TIME STAMP 1:25:00]

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yes, yes. If the people in town knew we were going to haul the seine, there would be maybe 15 people would come up in cars and walk up along the beach to meet us with the boat and they would help us haul. They'd all want a couple of fish. There was always enough fish to go around.

Marguerite Holloway: That's great. When there used to be so many fishermen right here when people were doing both drift netting and stake netting or specifically drift netting did they used to plug each other. I mean it sounds like an enormous number of fishermen in a very small space.

Tim DeGroat: No, they wouldn't, they'd try to be first. Everybody would want to be first in line figuring that the first guy in line would catch the most fish. But they'd look out for one another.

Man: Jetties up there, before they put the jetties up there that was a big beach out there. They could fish for seine would come in. Now they had to put those jetties because the beach was getting washed away. I've got pictures of that beach way back 1930. A lot of people from New Jersey came up here and went swimming. It was nice.

Tim DeGroat: This river back in the 1930s

Man: Used to be a gang of people come from Jersey.

Tim DeGroat: A lot of people recreated here.

Man: They used to park in our driveway over here. They asked me if they could park "Sure, you can park there." It used to be a gang of them on a Saturday and Sunday come up here from Jersey. Of course that wall. The wall was way out and you had that big hurricane back in 1951 or 1955, knocked the whole wall out of there so they brought the wall in six feet. This way you could drive your car and park right in that way. But now you can't. You have to park sideways. Little Grassy Point Beach. That beach used to be filled with people. My god. I tell ya, it was something this beach.

Marguerite Holloway: So even though there were so many fishermen, there was a sense of camaraderie, there wasn't a sense of competition.

Tim DeGroat: No, not really. There was enough room for everybody.

Man: It was all good fishing around here. Tomkins Cove. Jones Point, Haverstraw.

Tim DeGroat: A lot of the fishermen were related to me. My relatives were fishermen, you know. We're a big family. And the rest of them were friends. The one barroom on the corner in the winter time everybody would come down, husbands and wives and their children and they would be in there and they would play bagatelle on the old bagatelle table and the men would be in the back room. They had nails in the walls and things and they would string their nets up. They'd be working on their nets and have a pitcher of beer. It was more or less a family thing, you know.

Marguerite Holloway: That's great.

Tim DeGroat: Everybody helped one another.

Marguerite Holloway: Did fishermen ever come up from New Jersey or from New York City on barges with poles?

Man: No.

Marguerite Holloway: No.

Tim DeGroat: The past few years when the striper fishing got better, they'd come up with the party boats over on what we call the oyster beds over here. They used to raise oysters in the Hudson River years ago.

Marguerite Holloway: I didn't know that.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, if you look it up you'll find out in the history that they raised a lot of oysters in the Hudson. I don't know where you would have to look that up. Somewhere you'll find it.

Man: Is it coming back again.

Tim DeGroat: No, they'd seed the oysters here then dig them and take them down. I guess they wouldn't ripen in the fresh water. They'd have to take them down into the salt water for a short time.

Man: They caught a couple in the net though, didn't they? The crab nets.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, but that's the zebra clams and the other clams that are moving into the river. I think they're going to be very bad when they get going.

Marguerite Holloway: But shad fishermen didn't come up from down river following the fish?

Tim DeGroat: The what?

Marguerite Holloway: Shad fishermen didn't come up from down river following the shad, did they?

Tim DeGroat: No, not that I can recall in this area. But I remember my father and Tim's father when the shad got by here they would move further up they would go up to Esopus. The Mid Hudson they would take the boats and the nets and they lived in tents and they would follow the fish up the river.

Marguerite Holloway: As far as Esopus?

Tim DeGroat: As far as Esopus. After that they would be hauling the fish in the boat and after they unloaded the boat, the bottom of the boat would be covered with spawn, the fish would be spawning right in the boat. So then they would have to stop. The fish were spawning and they weren't worth anything then.

Marguerite Holloway: That's wild.

Tim DeGroat: The bottom of the boat would be 6 inches deep with water and shad spawn.

[TIME STAMP 1:30:00]

Tim DeGroat: They'd shovel, they would just shovel it overboard. Maybe some of it lived. I don't know. They were the only ones that I knew that followed the fish.

Marguerite Holloway: That's great.

Man: Tides coming up. Tide coming up?

Tim DeGroat: Yep it's coming up. Well, I don't know what else we can tell you about the Hudson.

Marguerite Holloway: I've got a lot more questions.

Man: What do you do? Write this all up now when you go home?

Marguerite Holloway: No, it's on the tape and it will go into the museum in Kingston. And hopefully people will come in and will listen.

Man: Oh yeah?

Tim DeGroat: You have one more question?

Marguerite Holloway: I have a bunch more questions.

Tim DeGroat: Oh, lord.

Man: What are you from Jersey?

Marguerite Holloway: No I'm from New York City.

Tim DeGroat: New York City.

Man: Who was the Jersey car?

Marguerite Holloway: It's a rental car. So it came from New Jersey.

Man: Oh. I wondering who owned the New Jersey car. So you're going to make it kind of big, huh?

Marguerite Holloway: What?

Man: You're going to make it kind of big, into a paper or something?

Marguerite Holloway: I don't know. It would be nice if the museum makes an announcement about this. I mean when it's all it will take a long time.

Man: A paper, like maybe some part of a fishermen book or something.

Marguerite Holloway: It would be a very nice idea to transcribe the tapes when they're all done and maybe take excepts and put them together. It's sometimes easier for people to read things than to hear things. I don't know.

Man: They don't do nothing fair on this Hudson River. All they look for is money. I tell you the numbers on these little boats now. Especially that Cuomo down there. He stinks.

Marguerite Holloway: Who?

Tim DeGroat: Mario Cuomo, he doesn't like him.

Man: You know what he's going to do? Did you see the headlines today? He's going to lay off 14,000 people.

Tim DeGroat: State workers, yeah.

Man: Lay them off.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you ever make your own boats?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yes, all these boats are home made.

Marguerite Holloway: Did your father teach you that too.

Tim DeGroat: No, Tim himself.

Man: Tim does his own

Tim DeGroat: Builds the boats, he's the one that started.

Man: These are some boats boy.

Tim DeGroat: She's asking about the boats if they're home made.

Man; Oh yeah, we make our own. Can't afford to buy those things. They want too much money.

Marguerite Holloway: So who taught you how to make boats.

Man: Timmy learned himself didn't you Timmy?

Man: The hard way. Just like doing new plans Draw one, then do a better one.

Tim DeGroat: Necessity being the mother of invention. That's it.

Man: One that's laying out there. Is that the first one you built? Then you built a better boat, plywood, green plywood. Wider, longer, better. 24 footers, 2 inch bottoms on them. Something like that, yeah. Those are some boats boy, they're heavy.

END OF RECORDING

Tim DeGroat: Which at that time was, for a fishing boat, you don't make that much money, it wasn't a lot of money but it was quite a bit of money. So guy had used the best of materials. He said he did, but he didn't. It started rotting away and everything. And I said, gee, I could build one as good as that if not better. And just at along his lines, I took some measurements and then I built it myself. I cut the bow pieces out with a Skill Saw, the bow piece you cut at 30 degrees and then you cut the wood and when you bend it you put braces in and you get that flare, that natural flare to it. I knew the workings of a boat. I think everyone I built I improved on. I've built 5 or 6, I can't remember now, 5 or 6.

Man: At least 5.

Marguerite Holloway: So was the first one, did it work well?

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, it worked pretty well. As a matter of fact, it's sitting right out there now yet, the first one. Not that one, that was a mistake, that one, the old "Christina". It worked, I had it for 10 years, then I gave it away.

Man: (crosstalk)

Tim DeGroat: Every one of these boats out here are homemade, except the one, the one way over there. All these are homemade, they're all homemade boats.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh wow.

Tim DeGroat: Those two over there, they're sisters, away over there in the back. Those are built almost identical, they're 24 footers. The one we sold, I sold to a fellow down Piermont and the other ones are smaller ones. He built his own right there. You'd be surprised what you can do.

Man: (crosstalk)

Tim DeGroat: out of necessity.

Man: How many screws you put in one of them boats?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, God, it must be 3,000. 3,000 screws in them anyway.

Man: 3,000, huh. Stainless steel?

Marguerite Holloway: How long does it take you to make one?

Tim DeGroat: We had a little screw gun. I could probably build one and do a good job on it in less than 2 months, if I worked on it almost every day, spare time, every day. That's not working 8 hours a day. Sometimes I would work 3, 4, in the summer time I'd work, or have a garage or someplace where you can get out of the weather in the winter time. We built one in the winter time. Down in Haverstraw, my buddy's garage. I helped him built the sister to this one, it took us about 2 months, fiberglass in his garage. We got one of these kerosene heaters. I don't know if you're familiar with fiberglass resin or not, but you want to get a natural high, that stuff is worse than pot. We worked there one night, putting that resin on and oh boy we went outside and we didn't know but we were on a high. Smelling those fumes in that fiberglass resin boy. (laughter) It heated the place, we'd smell it at first it was nauseating. Then after a while you got used to it. We didn't know but it was getting us high.

Marguerite Holloway: It's a good think your boats turned out straight.

Tim DeGroat: That was after they were all formed. The fiberglass is put on the outside, on the skin. We had one the fiberglass got ripped off, we had to put it back on again. We hit the dock and it cracked the fiberglass and the water got behind it and we didn't get it right away because we were using it, now it's ripped part way off. But each one I built, I got a little bit better with. And right now I can build one no problem. As a matter of fact I enjoyed it, I really enjoyed it. After a while I enjoyed building them.

Marguerite Holloway: Did your father make his own boats?

Tim DeGroat: He built a couple of them, years ago, yeah. Smaller boats. We built these boats we'd carry traps, you've always got ropes and anchors and if you've been in a fishing boat you know what I'm talking about. There's all kinds of trash in them. The way of the little boats is no longer, you need big boats to work out of.

Marguerite Holloway: How many traps do you set? There are enormous number of crab traps out there.

Tim DeGroat: I don't know how many guys that crab.

Man: There's only a few traps here. Most of them are home in the yards.

Marguerite Holloway: Really?

Man: There's not enough room to store them.

Tim DeGroat: I've got 100 home in my yard.

[TIME STAMP 5:00.0]

Tim DeGroat: Bobby's got, must have a hundred home in his yard. I say all told with everybody crabbing probably 500 traps.

Marguerite Holloway: And where do you sell the crabs?

Tim DeGroat: Markets, different markets. But that's with 5 different approved crab. 100 crab traps that isn't a lot for one guy. It sounds like a lot when you say 500 but you don't realize this is a big river and 500 is only a little speck. We crab up and down the river, we crab probably from here down around Rockland Light, that's about as far as we go. That's what I do now, I enjoy that more than I do shad fishing.

Marguerite Holloway: Why?

Tim DeGroat: It's easier. Not as hectic. You don’t' have to go on the tide. With the shad fishing you have to go or you lose everything and then you've got a mess. Crabs, you get a bad day, tough, they'll be there tomorrow.

Marguerite Holloway: You have a specific place that you will set as opposed to other people?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yeah, yeah. Known only to the guys that are crabbing. You can't put buoys on, you use references and then we grapple them.

Marguerite Holloway: You mean you have to use landmarks?

Tim DeGroat: You use landmarks and references. A piece of driftwood, I see a trap come by and (laughter)

Marguerite Holloway: You must be a very successful crab fisherman.

Man: If you put a buoy on there somebody will be out to haul your traps.

Tim DeGroat: I'll tell you what. You go down along that mountain and there's nothing but trees, but I'll tell you what, I had Bob's cousin was with us one day. He says to me Tim, how do you find out where your lines are? How do you know where your lines are? I said, you see that green tree in there? Which one are you talking about? I said, I use that as a reference. He even made a big joke about it. He said Bob, you know where Tim's line is there, by that green tree down there. That's how he knows where his lines are, by the green tree. But you do, you have to keep them secret.

Marguerite Holloway: Right.

Tim DeGroat: We've got thieves out here, people have no scruples at all. One fisherman. I've grappled up my buddy, he has a line across the river. We had one a little bit away. If I grapple his line up I tell my line from his. I just release it and let it go, fine. But you get these people out of their anchor, they anchor their boats out there and if they accidentally pull a line up. They're going to have a field day.

Man: If they just empty the traps it's not bad. Sometimes they take traps and all.

Marguerite Holloway: Is it, these are boaters who do this or these are people [crosstalk]

Tim DeGroat: Fishermen don't steal from one another. They have an unwritten rule. I don't touch your traps, you don't touch mine. Believe me, every fisherman does it different. He can tell his line just be looking at it. The way it's tied, the type of line he used, even the traps. Many of those traps all look the same, you built that trap, you know what that trap looks like compared to what he builds. It's an unwritten rule, we don't touch each other's traps. We've had some brand new traps here, year before last, stolen, they were there overnight, 5 traps, just like that.

Man: When you walked in there to do your thing, those traps that are there? The guy backed up with a pickup truck, right to the gate, right to the fence, stood up on the back of the pickup truck, reached over, took what traps he wanted and left.

Marguerite Holloway: You saw him do that?

Man: With so many people coming in and out of here why the guy took a chance like that, and they didn't get caught. Somebody saw him but they didn't know who he was and they figured he was somebody who belonged here.

Tim DeGroat: Look at the motors. Look at the outboard engines that are laying around here, that's a lot of money. That outboard engine right here today, that would cost you about $3,500 to $4,000 that engine sitting right here. There's 5 or 6 of them out there. What's to stop somebody from coming down here and take them?

Marguerite Holloway: Are there people here most of the time?

Tim DeGroat: Well yeah, except at night.

Man: But even at night, light Saturday nights' were' here but on nights during the week If somebody happens to be coming by, I've ridden in here to see if anybody's around.

Tim DeGroat: In the summer time we leave the flood light on because we had people steal gas tanks right out of the boat, and hoses, and life jackets. Weekend sailors, they come in here and steal. I respect other people's property. I'm not going to steal your property.

Man: I'm surprised though, you know, these motors here, guy don't get in here and

Tim DeGroat: Well, people don't know whether anybody lives here. There's usually a light on at night and a lot of times there's a car. And it's a dead end too, it's tough, you go in here and you're caught with something, where can you go. And the police come in here and turn around also. The Haverstraw, Stony Point, they bring a patrol car and they turn around. They know us.

[TIME STAMP 10:00.0]

Tim DeGroat: They know who should be here and who shouldn't be here. They see a stranger and they question [crosstalk] What you've got to worry about is somebody coming to that river. [crosstalk]

Man: Clean that gate up, they tore that gate up at night when you go out.

Tim DeGroat: It's tough man.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you put the motors in here, I mean?

Tim DeGroat: You could but it's takes up too much room and the smell of gasoline and oil and the chance of fires and stuff. Look, that's sacred, that's my I shouldn't have to do that. Don't touch my, I don't touch your equipment, why should you touch my equipment? I don't go around looking to see what I can steal from somebody. That's a shame. This is just rural Rockland County. It used to be lily white in Rockland County but it's not any longer.

Man: Yeah, nobody locked the door.

Man: Good protection, see that dog up there. He was how many years here?

Tim DeGroat: 13 years.

Man: 13 years and boy you couldn't get in here. He'd smell you coming. Blackie boy. He'd eat you up.

Tim DeGroat: He knew everybody that belonged here by the sound of their car.

Man: He'd lay there sound asleep. The cars would pull in. All of a sudden a strange car would pull in and he'd be right up and going.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow.

Man: He'd park and then he'd get out, get out. He was some watch dog that dog.

Tim DeGroat: They took one guy to the doctors and got sewed up because he didn't do what he was supposed to do.

Man: Remember him? Come in here and the colored guy come in here that day, had a fence here too. He took a little mud truck out.

Tim DeGroat: Through the gate and went inside the fence and everybody was hollering, "Don't go near that dog?" He didn't believe them. He believes them today. [laughter]

Man: [unclear timestamp 11:54]

Marguerite Holloway: When you, like with the crab pots, when you set, or used to set the stakes, did you have a specific place that was just yours? That was sort of traditionally

Tim DeGroat: You don't set stakes with crab pots.

Marguerite Holloway: No, no, no, no. But like, you have a specific place that you go to put your crab pots. Did you also have a specific place that you would set the stakes, it was assigned?

Tim DeGroat: Licensed by the State and the areas were given out by the Corps of Engineers.

Marguerite Holloway: So you couldn't choose which area you wanted?

Tim DeGroat: Well, you could if it was open, you could choose that area, if it was open it was yours. Some of the areas have 3, 3 or 4 in a row. It's all according to whereabouts on the water. Some of them

are only one deep. Each area consisted of 1200 feet each. Some of them were 3600 feet deep, some 4800.

Man: Mostly the east shore was two or three rows deep. The west shore the channel is close to the west shore so it would only be one row deep on this side of the river.

Tim DeGroat: We probably have between the 4 of us or 5 of us we probably had 15 to 16 maybe 18 areas. Today, 3 or 4 of them myself just to keep them. I only fish one.

Marguerite Holloway: So when did you switch from the poles to the anchor net?

Tim DeGroat: It was the early 1970s I guess.

Marguerite Holloway: And where did you learn how to do that?

Tim DeGroat: Just out of necessity and convenience. I come up with a unique way of fishing of my own. They used to fish with anchor nets. If you fish with an anchor net, you tie the bottom of the next to the anchor. And I don't know if you're familiar with it or not, how an anchor net works. You tie it to the bottom of the line, you have x amount of feet the net is off behind you. You anchor the bottom of the line. When you want to bring it up you pull one end of the line up with a rope and the haul comes up with it. It was all well and good as long as everything was going in the same direction, the tide, the wind. But if you were pulling that net you would get halfways out and the tide would change. Well, that's just too bad because what would happen was, the bottom one, the net would fold under and you've have a beautiful bow tie in the net. Then you had to go back through and thread the whole thing through. So I said, well, there's got to be a better way, so I fish with top line. Tie the top of the net across the top of the line and the jugs were on that and the weights were on the bottom of the net and it didn't make any difference what the tide did. The tide could be slack, going one way or going the other and the net would still drop right back down with the weights on them and hold the fish. And that's the way we fished. That's the way we still fish today. You put a harness, like a harness on each end of the next. It's 200 foot nets. Works out real well.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you have any special techniques for the stake netting also?

Tim DeGroat: Just the traditional way.

[TIMESTAMP 15:00]

Man: They had different ways of stake nets. Some fishermen fished with what they called space nets. In other words, there was one net between two poles.

Tim DeGroat: Each panel.

Man: And then one net between the next two poles. I didn't fish that way. You only made the nets as long as what you thought you could handle. And I made 400 foot long nets and I fished what they called a bucking net on the ebb tide. The net was against the poles. On the flood tide the net was handing away from the pole with the tide, had a ring top and bottom. And that would go across, raise the next up, take the fish out and it would go right back down behind me. But I couldn't haul it on the ebb tide,

only on the flood tide. Where the space nets they could haul either side. [cross talk] That was the only thing wrong with my net, was I could only haul it on the flood tide.

Tim DeGroat: But it made like one continuous fence with no spaces.

Marguerite Holloway: Right, no breaks around the poles.

Man: No openings.

Tim DeGroat: But there were so many fish that it didn't make any difference anyway. We welcomed to let some fish through because there were so many fish. I personally stood out here, myself on one given day, I had a guy on the back of the boat with me and I had a 1200 foot area right out here below the dock [unclear timestamp 16:23] And I personally picked 3600 pounds of fish myself.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow.

Tim DeGroat: It took me about 6 hours. That was roe. The bucks I was throwing them back. In fact, he sat in the back of the boat and was cleaning buck shad. He wanted some [unclear 16:40] while we were sitting there waiting. I only hauled 960 feet. I couldn't even get all the net. The tide changed on me and started swinging, 3600 pound, that's how many fish were out there.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow. So did you always get time off from work.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, I get 6 weeks vacation. I always used to take 4 weeks vacation just for fishing.

Man: That's what I did, yeah.

Marguerite Holloway: And you

Tim DeGroat: My brothers would get off. My brother worked for the town and my other brother, we would all take time off. We'd just fished. We practically lived here.

Man: You haul both tides, day and night tide.

Tim DeGroat: We'd have lights on the boat and we'd have everything prepared and we would sleep in between. Try to sleep at home and you spend a lot of time on the water. I've seen us spend 20 hours on the water, there's only 24 hours in the day. You're always tired, lose a tremendous amount of weight. It was either do it then or the fish didn't wait.

Man: The season only lasted just so long and you had to put maximum effort into what you were going to catch.

Tim DeGroat: Six weeks you know. If you get a six week season in the optimum height of the season would only be three weeks. That was when the fish, one continuous school of fish would come and you had to either be there or you missed out on them, that's all there was to it.

Marguerite Holloway: So did your family not see you for those entire 6 weeks?

Tim DeGroat: What?

Marguerite Holloway: Did you family not see you for those 6 weeks?

Tim DeGroat: No, no, no we communicated. We would eat here once in a while, but I would eat my meals home and sleep home. And my wife was a fisherman's widow. I've been married 33 years, she accepted that after a while. It was part of my life.

Marguerite Holloway: Did she ever help?

Tim DeGroat: No, my wife, she wanted no part of it. She don't like fish, she don't want no part of the fishing. She didn't even want to go near the boats.

Man: I took my wife once. I had the barges with the shad poles on down at Redstone Dock and I had to bring them up into Stony Point Bay. And she went with me for the ride and the barge would be going up and we'd be going down. And then we'd be going up the board and she got seasick and that was it. She said no more. That was the only time she ever went fishing.

Man: My wife's an inlander. She don't know nothing about the river, she couldn't care less.

Tim DeGroat: She's Polish, what do you expect? [laughter]

Marguerite Holloway: Let's hope she doesn't go to the museum and listen to this tape. So you worked at the Gypsum plant when you weren't fishing. What did you do?

Tim DeGroat: Operating engineer in heavy construction. I run bulldozer, backhoes, front end loaders, stuff like that.

Marguerite Holloway: What did your dad do?

Tim DeGroat: He worked on the railroad and then he drove a tractor trailer for 30 – 35 years. He was a teamster.

Marguerite Holloway: And he also would get that time off.

Tim DeGroat: Always had time off. He fished up until he got sick. He was 72 years old. He was still fishing.

Marguerite Holloway: What about your dad?

[TIMESTAMP 20:00]

Man: My dad, he worked up until he got sick, he worked and he fished up until he got sick. My dad trapped for a living too. Beaver, muskrat. Back during the Depression, he would have a trap line that we called two days long. He would leave the house in the morning, run the trap line, all the way out, through the woods and they would be so far from home the first night that he had to camp out there. He would stay in the camp overnight, then run the trap line on the way back the next day, so he'd be home for a night, then gone for a night, then home for a night. He'd trap muskrat, mink and he made a living that way.

Marguerite Holloway: Did a lot of people start fishing during the Depression because

Tim DeGroat: I would imagine. During the war also they had no restrictions on the war effort they had no limit. Used to fish seven days a week. My father used to fish seven days a week. Because they wanted the fish for something.

Marguerite Holloway: I thought there was a lot of concern about foreign boats coming up into the Hudson.

Tim DeGroat: That was a concern at one time. We pushed through lots of stuff, limited entry in the sophisticated gear. There was no sophisticated gear, the most sophisticated piece of equipment that's on our boats is the outboard motor. We don't want any fish finders and depth finders. We don't want that. Limited entry.

Man: That's what happened to all the ground fish along the coast, along the East Coast, all the fish finding equipment. They just deplete the whole fishery.

Tim DeGroat: My father and his father, years ago, this was before outboard even, I've got to tell you this story, God Bless His Soul. My father told me this story. When they finished fishing here. There were still fish up in the Esopus. They would catch a tow. Did he tell you this?

Man: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: They would catch a tow.

Man: I didn't tell them how they got there.

Tim DeGroat: They'd catch a tow, a tow going up the river.

Man: It would be a tow with barges.

Tim DeGroat: They would tow them up to the Esopus Island, and my father and his crew would sleep, would build a camp or build a camp site and would sleep right on the Esopus Island. They had, the water was so clear, they had linen nets they would have to drift at night. They fished with an old colored guy Mark Camp.

Man: Curry

Tim DeGroat: Most of the time they worked for his father. My father and my uncles worked for my uncle. And they would sleep on Esopus Island. And he said Pops used to get up in the night, used to know when the tide was right. The tide had to be just right. They would go out and they would pull three strokes off the beach and start throwing the net. They would throw their net. They knew exactly, repetitious every year. They would throw out their net and go back and go back to sleep. They knew exactly where that net was going to be x-amount of hours later when they got up. He tells the story, they were on Esopus Island. He said we lived off canned things. We were cooking beans, we cooked these red beans on the stove in a pot. He said, we had to go out and haul nets and I didn't want to burn the beans. So I took the pot and I put it on the side. We come back a couple of hours later, he said there was ants all over the top of the beans. So he said, we were so hungry, we scooped the ants off, heated the beans and ate them anyway. [laughter]

Man: Beans, a can of beans.

Tim DeGroat: This was my father, my father was one old tough fisherman. My father told me he was running a trip when they were in Newburgh Bay, they were waiting and it was raining. They were trying to sleep in the bow of the boat with canvas over the top of them. They must have been waiting on the drift net or something. He said holding Pollings (sp?) 7 or number 5, no, they were in the stern of the boat, or in the bow, they were in the bow of the boat. Pollings Number 7 come thru, hit them in the stern, took out the whole back of the boat off. He said they had to paddle ashore, they go almost sunk, it was raining, sleep under the toilet box with the canvas over the top of them he remembers. They could have gotten killed.

Marguerite Holloway: Good that they were in the bow. Did you ever have any near misses out on the river?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yeah, I have.

Man: Had a storm come up one day 3:15, 3:30 in the afternoon, Caught all the fishermen on the river. That was really a bad, bad, rough day.

Marguerite Holloway: No one could see it coming?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, yeah, we saw it coming but we couldn't get off fast enough. Usually a thunderstorm would give you a warning. It turns black, everything gets calm and then you've got a little bit of a lull in between and you always to try to take as long as you can

[TIMESTAMP: 25:00 MINUTES}

Because we can wait a few more minutes. I've picked nets in lightening and thunderstorms out there. It was hairy. I've got caught in just about everyone there was this summer coming up early with a crab on it. I've been caught in the storm and they wouldn't wait for us to get out of there and catch it. We worked the highest elevation out there that the lightening could hit. I'm saying to myself, there's a steel boat out there, maybe it'll get him. You ever been in an electrical storm on the water?

Marguerite Holloway: No.

Tim DeGroat: Sometimes your hair stands on end from the static in the air, I'll tell you what.

Man: What can you do? You're there, you have to try to get to shore but the storm is still going on, it doesn't wait.

Tim DeGroat: You'll be the first to know if it hits you. You'll be the first and the last. You've got to worry about it.

Man: Getting lazy. We could see it was the High Tor light, we knew we were headed for the right place. We got caught across the river with a boat. Me and Ryan.

Tim DeGroat: I got caught on there in every situation just about short of hurricane we've been out here.

Man: I can remember one time down off Hook Mountain, Area 8-4, got out there, hauling the net, all of a sudden the fog comes in. So, being that there was a fog, you follow the net rope. We used to haul from the inside out. After you get done hauling, you'd follow the net rope back in. Then it was only a few

hundred feet to shore and you would try to keep a straight line and you would go and go. Then all of a sudden, I'm lost now because you should have been ashore and there's no shore there. Then all of a sudden I say, "Oh, I see a pole." I come back, it was my outside pole. You would go in a big circle. Then you would go in a tie up to the inside pole and wait for the fog to lift. But you could get run over with the boats going up, they had radar and things.

Man: Years ago they used to anchor, but now they don't.

Man: They go now.

Man: We were out here in line 4 one night too in the fog. We had two boats out there that night.

Tim DeGroat: The fog set in so we all got in one boat and said let's, the inside pole is only 500 feet from the beach, we'll follow the poles in, we'll get away. Where we made a mistake was, we got the engine running and we let go of the pole and there was still tide and it pushed us up away from the poles. Then we didn't see anything, boy somebody cut them poles off, they're gone. So we're trying to run with the engine and I could not, go around in circles. I mean, you're loose, have you ever been in a fog? If you're loose, you lose all sense of direction, all sense of direction.

Marguerite Holloway: And distance.

Tim DeGroat: It's just like vertigo. I mean, it's terrible.

Man: If you have a compass you're all right.

Tim DeGroat: We had a compass, it was in here in the boat house.

Man: The only thing you can do

Tim DeGroat: How can you get lost on the Hudson River? Just like some of the rain gear, $600 worth of rain gear sitting in the booms getting soaking wet.

Man: The only thing you can do in the fog at night would be to shut the motor off

Tim DeGroat: And listen.

Man: And listen and hope you could hear the gypsum plant running, or hope a train would be going by.

Tim DeGroat: Remember when K Freezer stopped, had that steam coming, it was like a landmark. I could hear that. See a black outline, there it is, there's the shore. The next morning they were still there. Somebody come through with an ax, they're gone. It's a weird feeling to be out there in the boat with 15 foot waves, I mean literally they looked they were 25 but they were probably about

Man: Like mountains, everyone looked like it was going to swallow.

Tim DeGroat: And I put a life jacket on. I thought we were going down. My brother, Bill Dolan said I never seen a fisherman put his life jacket on. When I seen your brother and his buddy going and him holding the tiller helping him put a life jacket on, oh my wife says, we're in trouble. He had one of these crafts. It was a steel craft and he had a captain that he was doing surveys on the river and my buddy and I, Chuck, we anchored off the back of us before it started getting dark, we used to stay for all the

sturgeon and he would tag the sturgeon, he was doing a survey and we would give them to Bill Dolan and his wife, I don't know if you've ever heard of Bill.

Marguerite Holloway: Yes I have.

Tim DeGroat: Bill used to do the Chesapeake Bay and he was out here on the river one day and he had his wife and a man to captain with him.

[TIMESTAMP 30:00]

Tim DeGroat: We got on board, this captain kept circling. I was saying to myself, what is this clown doing, he can't be doing this. And every time he turned one way, the dishes would run out onto the floor, smash. Bill's wife her eyes are getting like that and Chuck's patting her on the back "Don't worry." I finally said to Bill afterwards, a couple of weeks later I said "Bill, where did you hire this guy? What was he trying to prove?" Bill said "I don't know, I thought he knew what he was doing." I said "I could have done better than that." He said "Why didn't you say so." I said "He's a professional captain that's a hole in the side of my boat like that." I mean, he had 55 gallon drums of gasoline on the deck, they were tied down, they were starting to do this. That's how bad the waves were. Every time we'd come around into the wind that rudder bar boat would hit that great big steel sides of that steel boat and just boom like that we'd go.

Man: Leo said he'd dropped to the bottom of the boat to hold on. Bill said that was the first time

Tim DeGroat: Leo hooked on to the line, he let go of the line. He wouldn't go over the seats, he was under the seats, fishing line. He didn't care that it was fishing line, it went right under the seats, afraid to go over the seats for fear he'd get thrown overboard. He went under. And my brother, all I kept thinking about, I wasn't afraid, I was concerned, I never really was afraid, I can honestly say that. You had to be there. I was more concerned about my brother and Buddy Gore at the time. When Bill said he saw them putting the life jackets on, I said, I'm going to a funeral. They ended up over in Croton. Jake said I had to hold the tiller with one hand, we had that much water in the boat, it was raining so hard and we were going with the waves. We couldn't dare go away from the waves. We always get our storms out of the northwest here, our thunderstorms.

Man: Bad storms, yeah.

Tim DeGroat: Buddy Gore had a, Jake had to hold the tiller with one hand while Buddy slipped the life vest on this arm, then he had to hold the tiller in this hand while he slipped the life vest on the other way. We never put life jackets on.

Man: You can't work with them.

Tim DeGroat: Flotation jackets, we wear the flotation jackets because you go overboard in cold water, you're done. They're quite expensive but they're worth the money. But we never used to wear them years ago. Nobody had money for that. So when Bill said, when I see a fisherman put his life jacket on, I was a little concerned.

Marquerite Holloway: So they got blown all the way over

Tim DeGroat: All the way down to Croton, that's ten miles. Ten miles as the crow flies got into Croton by Potato Rock, that's eight miles anyway, at least eight miles. We used to travel that every day and it would take fifteen minutes wide open with our fishing poles to go down there. We fished down there by Sing Sing Prison. We knew how far it was. We nicknamed that Croton Triangle. Worst piece of water in the world on the Hudson River when it's bad. [unclear 33:00] Croton Triangle.

Marquerite Holloway: Because it gets so narrow and you have all this volume of water being squeezed

Tim DeGroat: On that neck right there.

Man: Right into the neck from Tiller's Point here and Hook Mountain here. The river makes, well they show the channel like this (crosstalk).

Tim DeGroat: That's 20 feet of water on my outside net. My first two outside nets were in 45 feet of water. One year I thought I was going to be cute. We were fishing, we fished in Croton and we got a lot of striper. That's striper heaven down there, we'd get a lot of shad. We'd catch more shad down at Croton than anybody on the river at one time. Anybody, I don't care, Gabrielson, we would catch more than him down there at Croton. Because the direct line passed from the Tappan Zee Bridge, you could see that channel. The direct line from Croton Point, we were right there waiting for the shad when they came up. Well, I decided one year I wanted to put some 60 mesh neat nets out there, 200 footer or something, first 600. I had my kid, I had Frankie with me. Billy and Jake and Joel they were all in the other boats. I said, I'll catch a lot of shad. Well, we did. 60 mesh nets sewed in two-thirds, no they were 4 on 12 was 20 feet deep on the ends. 20 feet deep on the ends, they were all fagged out to about 30 feet in the middle. That's deep, that's deep for shad. We came here one day and I said, somebody cut the bouys on them outside nets or more. So we got to the third net in and we started pulling up, it resisted but it came up, they were coming up. Sweetie, they was wall to wall fish.

Marguerite Holloway: And that's why it pulled right down.

Tim DeGroat: It pulled the weights and all, right down. When we started we said my God Frankie we'll never take hold of the fish. So we started, we'll take one at a time, put it in the boat, pick it sure and pick it. We got 15 feet of net in the boat

[TIMESTAMP 35:00]

And the fish were piled that high. You know what we ended up doing? Cutting the nets off and letting them go. Every mesh had a shad on it. That was the last time I ever used 60 mesh net.

Man: Did you ever see a net that's really overloaded with fish?

Marguerite Holloway: No I haven't.

Tim DeGroat: You can't get it in the boat.

Man: We had three 35 foot nets, they were what, 50 meshes.

Tim DeGroat: 105 feet of net that had 1800 pound of fish in 105 foot of net.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow. So you can't pick that, you have to just pull that

Man: You have to bring it ashore or tow it.

Tim DeGroat: I hated to do that. There was probably, there had to be a ton of fish in each one of them, I hated to, we had no choice it kept getting worse if we'd let it go another tide, it would have been even worse. I said we'll lose everything. So I had to cut the nets loose and let fish and all go. We couldn't even get them up over the side. It would just tear, I lost three beautiful brand new nets plus all those fish. That was right dead line in the 40 some feet of water, just below Tellers Point about just above the red buoy and it was 40 feet of water out there. Where Johnny Leach's father.

Marguerite Holloway: When we this that you caught

Tim DeGroat: 1980 something. We fished down at Croton. As a matter of fact we still hold areas down there. We probably hold a dozen areas in Croton Bay off Sing Sing. The lines are still there the bottom line. We haven't fished down there now in probably 7, 8 years.

Man: Think you could find the line.

Tim DeGroat: Oh they're still there. As a matter of fact, one of the fishermen over there come up and asked if he could use one of the lines. I told him go ahead.

Man: Those lines as long as they're under water will last probably forever.Sunlight's the only thing

Tim DeGroat: Greenburg, he asked me, Cal, big tall Cal. I said sure, go ahead Cal. They're just sitting there, if you want to use them, go ahead.

Marguerite Holloway: So they just stay down there indefinitely?

Tim DeGroat: They've got weight on them, hold them under the water. They're in the mud. Mud and silt gets over the top. We've got readings. I've got charts and stuff. Look by that big old green tree you'll see. My dad was quite a fisherman and his father. My father up until the time he got sick he would go out in all kinds of nets.

Marguerite Holloway: What did you like so much, you said at the beginning that he really liked drifting. What did he like so much about it?

Tim DeGroat: I guess he just liked it. He was born and raised with that. See us guys we wanted to make a quick buck. We couldn't see wasting your time sitting out there hour after hour. We were a little impatient. I wanted to make a big bed. Little did we know. But that was quite a thing, drifting.

Man: Yeah, back in the 1930s and 1940s when they did it, there wasn't near as much boat traffic on the river as there is today.

Tim DeGroat: Not nearly as much.

Man: Well, you had a lot of steamboats go up.

Tim DeGroat: They took off all the restrictions that you could make [crosstalk]They'd have to look for me in Tahiti because I'd be out there sunning myself on the islands. I kid you not.

Marguerite Holloway: Have you ever been to Tahiti?

Tim DeGroat: No, not one of my favorite places. Just that's what I could afford to do if. You hear all about these poor fishermen on television. You see it every day these. There they've got 80 foot trawlers with $200,000 nets hanging off the back and they're leaning over the rail, oh I don't know how I'm going to make my next meal, things are really bad. I mean, come on, you've got a million dollar boat there with a hundred thousand dollars worth of net and he can't make his next meal, who is he kidding. All fishermen are liars except him and I and I'm not sure about him. [laughter] These guys cry poverty and all. But let's face it, we're poor, we've only got a little old flat bottom boats with 50 horse power motors.

Man: Poverty builds character.

Tim DeGroat: What?

Man: Poverty builds character.

Tim DeGroat: But if they were to take the restrictions off.

[TIMESTAMP 40:00]

Tim DeGroat: Like before like before 1975, leave us alone. I could make a comfortable living on what's out there, and then with the crabs, the eels, the stripers and the shad. I could retire from U.S. Gypsum tomorrow. If the State of New York says, go ahead boys, go catch the stripers. I wouldn't even paint my boat, it would be in the water tomorrow, I'd be out here tomorrow. Hire somebody else to paint it. I'm serious, I mean, that's how you can make a good buck. But they found that out and they said well, you're not going to get away with that. We're going to find some way to stop it.

Man: Have you run across any of the hybrid stripers? That they're stocking in some of the lakes around?

Marguerite Holloway: No.

Man: If you get a chance try one. They are a very good eating fish. [unrelated side conversation at Tim DeGroat leaves the room]

Marguerite Holloway: But what about the hybrid stripers?

Man: They had them up in one of the lakes here in Orange County. Mombasha the fellow across the street got into a good night of fishing and he caught probably 8 or 10 and he gave me two. And I've eaten a lot of striper, but those hybrid stripers were very good eating fish. If you like fish, and somebody offers you one, take it. The hybrid stripers. They're a whiter fish, the stripes aren't as prominent on them as on the striper. But they are a very good eating fish.

Marguerite Holloway: So have your children, do you have any children?

Man: Yes, a son and a daughter

Marguerite Holloway: Are they interested?

Man: They are not interested in fishing, no. My son is interested in trout fishing and that's it.

Man: Well, we lived on fish when I was 10 years old. We used to go fishing with needles. We bent it up, we couldn't afford to buy hooks, so we made them with black thread. We used to catch a lot of fish, eels

and perch. My mother used to cook. We had fish every day. There was 8 of us, you know. We had to eat. My father died when he was young, he was only 36 years old. My father died in World War I. We had rotten, that's why I worked on the brickyard, I was only 12 years old. Getting up at 4:00 in the morning, go out and work all day, helping my mother out.

Marguerite Holloway: What was it like, working at the brickyard?

Man: Hard work. That's hard work. That was back breaking. You had to get used to it.

Man: Now days you see them loading pallets of brick onto trucks and things, back then, they loaded them on the sailing vessels here in the river. And they had wheelbarrows and they wheeled the brick aboard. We had to load it by hand and unload it by hand.

Man: And they used to have barges carrying 250,000 bricks. I was so small, I had to stand on a stack of bricks so I could put the bricks up on the dock. That's how small I was. I used to step over Jack Feeney and Butch Feeney, I did. I'll never forget that. I was only 12 years old. I was doing a man's job, imagine that. I did everything on the brickyard, everything on the brickyard.

Tim DeGroat: Do you have a lot more questions yet?

Marguerite Holloway: No, not too many more.

Tim DeGroat: How many people have you interviewed?

Marguerite Holloway: Thirteen, Fourteen.

Tim DeGroat: All about shad?

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah.

Tim DeGroat: You're very interested in shad?

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah.

Tim DeGroat: How much do you know about shad?

Marguerite Holloway: Just what I know from talking to the fishermen.

Tim DeGroat: Do you know how to tell the difference between a male and a female?

Marguerite Holloway: Yes, I can do that.

Tim DeGroat: Not the way I do, I bet you don't.

Marguerite Holloway: How do you do it?

Tim DeGroat: I look at their eyes.

Marguerite Holloway: Their eyes?

Tim DeGroat: One's got black eyes, one's got blue eyes. Next time you see a male and you look at them, see if I'm telling you the truth.

Man: You know how many people ask me how I tell the difference?

Tim DeGroat: I told you, look at their eyes. [laughter]

Man: It's pretty hard to tell about a beaver

Tim DeGroat: I said you've got to be careful, some of them got a black eye and some of them got a black eye and a blue eye. I don't know what he is. You've got to be careful. [laughter]

Man: I seen on T.V. the other night

[TIMESTAMP 45:00]

Man: You can't hardly tell.

Tim DeGroat: Honest to god, every year, without fail 100 people, ask me, how do you tell the difference.

Marguerite Holloway: Oh, that's great. So there are a lot of people come down here and buy fish?

Tim DeGroat: We have a lot of people buy fish here. We've gotten away from the fish markets. I have a private buyer. Gives you one set price, no aggravation, that's it. Everything comes here, and takes everything.

Marguerite Holloway: He picks it up.

Tim DeGroat: He comes here and takes the fish, all the way down to south Jersey. They filet sometimes 10,000 pounds a day.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you ever do fileting?

Tim DeGroat:

{audio picks up again at 46:05 minutes]

[laughter]

Tim DeGroat: I don't know what the cat[fish?] might be. She's in one of the books I've got. We've got them all, believe me, we've got them all.

Man: They're a good tasking fish. How many parts?

Tim DeGroat: Bones and everything. Well, let's face it, they're built for deep water. Real ribs so they don't crush. They believe they go through the Azores. I don't know, who knows.

Man: Well, we know they go up the Gulf of Maine and out that way.

Tim DeGroat: But that's when they're spawning. Right now, they're not spawning and might start catching them now in Florida, and they work their way up the coast. Because they're probably getting them, the people we deal with, they've got buyers from Florida all the way up to us each year. That's how they keep their business going right through Mother's Day. Usually Mother's Day I finish up. Then we get ready for crabs.

Marguerite Holloway: How do you tell when the shad are in the river? You've heard it other fishermen?

Tim DeGroat: Nah, we know, we know, they're just there every year.

Man: They're there within a week of that time every year. They're almost like the swallows the Capistrano. You can almost set your calendar.

Man: I'm going to get going, see you later.

Marguerite Holloway: Bye, it was nice meeting you, thank you very much.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, we know, we just know. If it's a warm spring maybe they're here a week or so early. If it's a cold spring they're a little bit later, that's all. It's all according to water temperature. The water temperature gets up to a certain degree or whatever, they're gone.

Man: I can remember years back when I fished off Hook Mountain. I would be catching loads of shad, down there and Tipper wouldn't be catching anything up here. They won't come across the shallow water. They stay in the deep water until the water temperature gets right. There are a lot of factors. The snow melt and ice upstate, comes down the river.

Tim DeGroat: I believe in all of that stuff too. The salt line and the moon and all that stuff. It all works. Fish, what goes around, comes around. It's just like a cycle. Fish are in a cycle. All creatures have cycles. The crabs for the longest time, we used to catch all kinds of crabs. Then they disappeared. Now the cycle is coming back again. Now the crabs are coming back. The same way with the shads, the stripers, the menhaden, the herring. We catch menhaden out here like you wouldn't believe. We used them for crab bait. Ideal crab bait, bag them up. Every day we bag them up, freeze them, used them for crab bait.

Marguerite Holloway: Can you make a good amount of money in crab season?

Tim DeGroat: We make a few bucks, we make a few bucks. We don't want to get into specifics.

Marguerite Holloway: No of course not. [laughter]

Tim DeGroat: We make a few bucks. Like I said you're not going to get rich or I wouldn't be working. I wouldn't be worried about ____ and that work jacket if I was making all kinds of money. I'm not like those poor fishermen in fishermen's magazine there, $100,000 nets and million dollar yachts for fishing boats, crying poverty.

Marguerite Holloway: But even if you were really rich, you think you'd still want to shad fish?

Tim DeGroat: Hell, no. Yeah, I probably would.

Man: There's something about.

Tim DeGroat: Rich people don't shad fish. Rich people don't know anything about it. All they know is about eating it. Eating shad. If I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth we probably wouldn't be fishermen. Most fishermen, probably it was passed down through tradition. So if your father, your grandfather did it.

[TIMESTAMP 50:00]

Tim DeGroat: That's why I said there's four to five generations in my family that did it. I think my great-grandfather was 17 years old he had a pilot's license on the Hudson for brick barges, for brick schooner. 17 years old he had a pilot's license. So I would imagine he probably fished. I trace our family back, the DeGroat family, Dutch, you know really goes back a long, long ways. Now you live in New York City, I'm sure you know this. I'll tell you how far back the Dutch go in my family. Remember that guy that bought Manhattan Island off the Indians for $24 in beads, what was his name?

Marguerite Holloway: Peter Minuit.

Tim DeGroat: That's pretty sharp. Well I'll tell you how far back my family does. My ancestors stole the beads off the Indians, that's how far back we go. [laughter] Yeah, we go back to New Amsterdam, why it was called New Amsterdam, the Dutch.

Man: You don't know how much you miss this Hudson River. I don't know about the girls, but most of the men went into service, went away to war.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, I missed it.

Man: And when I come back home, I got picked up down in New York and when we come through the cut in the mountains and I could see the Hudson River, I knew I was home.

Tim DeGroat: When I was in Germany.

Marguerite Holloway: What did you feel after seeing the river again after being away.

Tim DeGroat: Just rejoicing. I've got sea water in my blood, I enjoy it, I enjoy water.

Man: You don't realize how green the Hudson River Valley is until you get to other parts of the world and the western United States. You come back here and green takes on a new name. It's just so beautiful in the Hudson River Valley.

Tim DeGroat: What do you do for a living?

Marguerite Holloway: I work at a magazine called *Scientific American*.

Tim DeGroat: Never heard of it.

Marguerite Holloway: And I'm an editor and a writer so I edit articles that are by scientists so that people, so that I can understand them, so that other people can understand them. And then I write articles usually about the environment or about the brain, neuroscience.

Man: Did you take marine biology?

Marguerite Holloway: No, I've always loved marine biology.

Man: Yeah, that would have been great for you to have.

Tim DeGroat: You went to college?

Marguerite Holloway: I went to college, yep.

Tim DeGroat: My daughter is going now, she's going through nursing and it's nerve-wracking for her, RN.

Marguerite Holloway: It's very hard.

Tim DeGroat: You've heard of NYPIRG, I assume.

Marguerite Holloway: Yep.

Tim DeGroat: Only one thing kept me out of college,

Marguerite Holloway: What was that?

Tim DeGroat: High school. [laughter] I got backyard learning. I make a good living, I have a high school education as is, I make a good living. You're only, you're only a child, I mean you can't be much more than in your 20s.

Marguerite Holloway: Yeah, 28.

Tim DeGroat: You're about a year or so older than my daughter, that's all.

Man: She's younger than my children.

Tim DeGroat: And you work, what is it?

Marguerite Holloway: *Scientific American*

Tim DeGroat: Is that one of them down in New York City.

Marguerite Holloway: It's down in New York City and it's mostly a collection of seven articles by scientists and then there's some writing by journalists. But it's mostly read by people who are really interested in science.

Tim DeGroat: Are you like an independent or were you like assigned to this specific?

Marguerite Holloway: This? No this is something I really wanted to do for a long time.

Tim DeGroat: How did you get introduced to something like this with the shad in the Hudson River?

Marguerite Holloway: When I was in journalism school, after I went to college, I went to journalism school and I've always, I grew up in New York and my mother always loved the river and taught me a lot about the river and I didn't even know that there were shad fishermen on the river until I got to journalism school and I was reading about the river a lot and I saw some newspaper articles on the shad fishing. So then I went out with Ronnie Ingold and then I just, it was really hard work, I fished with him for a couple of days, I couldn't make it longer than that.

Tim DeGroat: They don't understand, people do come here and think that the fish jump right in the boat. I'm serious. There are people, I'm sure you saw maybe with Ronnie, people think, well, gee, they jump in the boat, what don't you give me some of them. We've got people that two miles away from the river here don't even know the river exists. And we try to educate people.

[TIMESTAMP 55;00]

Tim DeGroat: I don't care whether anybody knows about it. I do, I love it. I remember when me and my father dug that river. [laughter] Remember that?

Marguerite Holloway: You what?

Tim DeGroat: Me and my father dug that river.

Marguerite Holloway: That's pretty neat, I didn't know I was interviewing the man that dug the Hudson. [laughter]

Tim DeGroat: How many times did you have to fix the wheelbarrow for it.

Marguerite Holloway: You called him a liar earlier. [laughter]

Tim DeGroat: All fishermen are liars, except him and me and I'm not too sure about him. And that leaves questionable.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you have a lot of pictures of?

Tim DeGroat: Someplace we do yeah, I've got pictures home, I've got pictures here.

Man: There's pictures here of the shad coming in.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, that's the old, cameras with all kinds of pictures, from out in California I guess it was? Never saw a stitch of it.

Marguerite Holloway: Really?

Tim DeGroat: Now John Cronin come by here last May, he interviewed my father before he died. They had $50,000 to do a, They did a tape, he called me here a month or so ago, said that he was flying to California to edit it and then I would get a copy of the tape. We had NBC News here one day, they took all kinds of pictures. Conveniently the tape froze.

Man: Do you know John Cronin?

Marguerite Holloway: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: Riverkeeper.

Marguerite Holloway: Yes, did he, was a it a video tape or . It was a video tape.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, they had a whole camera crew and everything. A whole bag full of sophisticated equipment. I took them out on the river with me and everything. John and I go back a long ways. John fished out of here one year. John [crosstalk] Right here at this boat house.

Man: Do you know Chris?

Tim DeGroat: Chris Letts.

Marguerite Holloway: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: You know Chris, Christopher Letts, the Old Man and the Sea. And old Henry, you must know old Henry then too.

Marguerite Holloway: Yes, I know them.

Tim DeGroat: Old reprobate.

Marguerite Holloway: Henry [Gourdine] is great.

Man: (crosstalk) I think Chris.

Tim DeGroat: Telling long tales, there he is, he's the king, you tell him I said so if you see him.

Marguerite Holloway: I think he'll disagree with you.

Tim DeGroat: Who Henry? He can spin yarns like you wouldn't believe. I sit there expectantly. He's a great old guy. Hope he lives forever. We went to his 80th birthday, that was about 7 or 8 years ago. I know he's got to be 86 or 87.

Marguerite Holloway: Well, he was born in 1903.

Tim DeGroat: You figure it out.

Marguerite Holloway: His birthday was on the 7th of January, it was just a couple of days ago.

Man: 1903, so 1992. That's 89 years old.

Tim DeGroat: He's got to get an Academy Award for spinning yarns. You tell him I said so.

Marguerite Holloway: I will. So nothing he's told me is true. [laughter]

Tim DeGroat: Just tell him that I said he's a great yarn spinner, tell him I said he spins too many yarns. He's been known to say more than his prayers. [laughter] I get him going when he comes here, he comes here once in a while. I get him going.

Marguerite Holloway: Well next time he comes to visit you should let me know because I'll come up.

Tim DeGroat: He's a great old guy. The old Black guy from Piermont, Robbie Brooks, he comes here and he spins some yarns. Gab will come here and Gabrielson he's talking so fast he don't know what to say next. He gets infuriated with the State. Did he come across that way to you?

Marguerite Holloway: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: He uses some of them three letter words, four letter words.

Marguerite Holloway: Only four letter words. Where is Robbie Brooks?

Tim DeGroat: Pardon my French.

Marguerite Holloway: Where is Robbie Brooks? He's in Piermont.

Tim DeGroat: Robbie lives in Piermont.

Marguerite Holloway: How old is he?

Tim DeGroat: Robbie's got to be in his 60s. Robbie's got to be retired. He'd fish with Dink, Dink Hardy. Do you know Dennis? I knew Dennis' father, Dink was the original president of our organization. Don, we called him Dink, Dink Hardy.

Marguerite Holloway: Who else is around that I should talk with, who are the other old timers? Chris Stoling?

[TIMESTANP 60:00]

Tim DeGroat: [unclear] Bobby's about the same age as I am. Hanson doesn't fish anymore.

Man: Did you get across the river over there, what's his name over there?

Marguerite Holloway: Tucker?

Man: Tucker.

Marguerite Holloway: Tucker and Jim Carey, yeah.

Tim DeGroat: Jim Carey, he's a nice old guy.

Man: Charlie Weiss.

Marguerite Holloway: I'm seeing them both tomorrow. I didn't know Charlie, no.

Man: Charlie died.

Tim DeGroat: His own doings, he didn't take care of himself.

Man: Charlie must have weighed what 375 pounds

Tim DeGroat: If he weighed an ounce. Old Jimmy Carey, tell him I said hello, tell him Tim said hello.

Marguerite Holloway: Okay.

Tim DeGroat: Turk he calls me. (unclear) crab traps. You trust people, he pulled up the lines and Tim he said, I knew it wasn't mine after I hauled the first trap. I said that don't look like mine. Because he had quite a line up there. Jimmy's in his 70s.

Man: Yeah, he's gotta be.

Tim DeGroat: He still fishes for sturgeon. He's one of the guys that does fish for sturgeon in the summer time.

Marguerite Holloway: And Tucker.

Tim DeGroat: And Tucker, Tucker Crawford.

Marguerite Holloway: Who else should I talk with?

Tim DeGroat: I don't know, I don't know any of them guys up the river. You talk to Gabrielson and Jimmy Carey and old man Gourdine you've talked to three of the most colorfulist guys on the river right now. They can spin yarns. Especially Tucker Crawford. Tucker can really spin some yarns.

Marguerite Holloway: Can I take pictures of you both? Can I take a picture of you both standing outside the shed.

Tim DeGroat: Sure.

Tim DeGroat: We were taking fish down, we were paying three cents a pound. We used to put them in crates.

Man: 50 pounds.

Tim DeGroat: Crates, you know, fish crates. So he went down there and I said, what you do is you go over and you see the buyer and you tell him that you've got X amount of fish on the truck and that they're from MD Grove, you give him the tag. And he'll send you over some handlers to take care of the fish, you don't take them off.

Man: No, you don't unload your own truck.

Tim DeGroat: You go down and see old Sam, Sam said I'll send you over two handlers. So the guy goes over to the back of the truck and three handlers come over. Now they're not going to tell on one another. This guy comes and he gets 9 carton of fish, so when he got all done, he never came back again. The regular two handlers come back, so he goes over, he says to Sam, you've got 30 cartons of fish, just for hypothetically, you've got 30 cartons of fish. He says, no you didn't, you only got 21. But there was 30 cartons on there. How many handlers? He said, there was three. He said, I told you two handlers, not three. That third handler got nine boxes of fish, took them off to somebody else and sold them. I mean that's how underhanded they were. He got paid for 21 cartons. Sam says, you've gotta watch, you've gotta watch out. We're not going to protect you, you've got to protect yourself.

Marguerite Holloway: So what he should have done is say something to that third handler, or was there nothing he could really do at that point, or he'd get in trouble.

Tim DeGroat: What he should have done was find out who the two were together first. That was only the first time they did it. The second time after that, he made sure of who was coming over and who was handling the fish.

Man: We knew all the handlers.

Tim DeGroat: I've got 31 cartons of fish, you two guys are handling it, you make them sign a receipt or something. I've seen tractor trailer come in with a load of sole on from say Cape Cod or something and the guy had the back door open. The back door, he pulled up the street and back and he hit a bump and one of them cartons fell off and smashed open. Before he got stopped there was guys out there with coal scoops scooping them up, throwing them in the wheelbarrow and going in the back streets with them.

[TIMESTAMP 1:05:00]

Tim DeGroat: You go down to the City those people have, there are some great people down there I was down there for jury duty, for Federal Court. I met some beautiful people that live in New York City, they're not all bad, just a percentage of them are bad. You've got you some bad people here, cut your throat for a nickel or your coat.

Man: We used to put fish in wooden boxes, 100 pound boxes, we put 120, 130 pounds in a box and most of the time, Tim and I would deliver them ourselves down there. And it's always a little tip would get you more than your share. You would tip the handlers to take care of your fish next. You would go over in the back street where you'd pick up the boxes. You would tip the guy there, he would give you the better boxes.

Tim DeGroat: Or he would move a tractor trailer out of the way. You throw him a $5 bill, he'd say "Okay get that tractor out of the way." He'd make like how many you want.

Man: Just for a couple of bucks.

Tim DeGroat: Always this, and we knew how to handle it.

Man: Everything under the table.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you ever get into trouble?

Tim DeGroat: No, never once. And never was cheated out of a nickel. We were cheated on price but I never got cheated out of a check. Always received a check.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you always deal with the same dealer down there?

Tim DeGroat: No. After a while I started to because he would take a little bit better care of us and he would give us a 5 cent bonus for every pound of fish. There was a 5 cent bonus and at the end of the year we'd have to go down and he'd walk around, introduce you to everybody and he'd give you the 5 cent bonus.

Man: You take a 5 cent bonus doesn't sound like a lot.

Tim DeGroat: But over a season. It would be like $1000 or more.

Man: Thousands of dollars it amounted to, you know.

Marguerite Holloway: Who was the dealer who did this.

Man and Tim DeGroat: Ackley and Sanford, MP Levy, Ford Fish Company, Coast Lobster and Fish Company.

Tim DeGroat: But the last one, who was the guy and his son on the street corner that used to sell the – Barrons.

Man: Behrings.

Tim DeGroat: It was trust. You would turn over maybe $1000 worth of fish on any given night to these people with nothing written down, absolutely no receipt or nothing. With the assuredity that you would go home and get a check. Always got a check. That's one thing I will say, Always got a check.

Marguerite Holloway: So you didn't mind having to pay a little extra for someone to move the truck.

Tim DeGroat: No. But the thing was, you never knew what you were going to get, what price you were going to get.

Man: They always paid the market price but I think they all got together and had a meeting and said okay, this is what we're going to pay, you know.

Marguerite Holloway: This is the market price.

Tim DeGroat: We were at their mercy.

Man: We were getting 1940s prices in 1980.

Tim DeGroat: That's what I said. I think I left the market in 1978, 1976. Either I've got to quit or I've got to find a private buyer. So my cousin was taking them down for me and he had this fellow approach him. He said, hey buddy, where are you getting all these shad? My cousin George said, my cousin fishes up on the Hudson. He said, do you think he could get me some fish? He said, well I'll tell you, I'll give you his telephone number. So it was these guys that come up all the way from South Jersey to go buy fish in the Fulton Fish Market, they weren't sure exactly what they were getting. And they were paying top dollar. So we got together and

Man: Cut out the middle man.

Tim DeGroat: Cut out the middle man. And ever since then they come right directly here and take my fish.

Marguerite Holloway: So the Fulton Fish Market never retaliated because you looked around

Tim DeGroat: We just told them we didn't fish anymore. I don't fish no more, I quit.

Man: I don't know whether Tim can remember or not but years back, in the Fish Market I'm saying, back in the late 1930s and the 1940s, maybe even up into the early 1950s. You could go down and buy net, rope and everything down there, they would pay for it. Like Ford Fish Company, they would pay for the net. Then you had to ship your fish to them. They would deduct out of that the amount. They would almost set you up in business.

Tim DeGroat: Remember they used to come up here, we used to meet at the restaurant and bar before the season? They'd have different buyers would come up and tell us what they were going to pay. Like a union meeting, they'd all come up throw out a few drinks and something to eat at the local bar.

[TIMESTAMP 1:10:00]

Tim DeGroat: And all the fishermen would meet there and they'd come in and say, we'd like to have your business.

Man: You just picked the guy that seemed the most honest and would offer you the best price and the best bonus.

Tim DeGroat: Always got a bonus, usually. 2 cent or 5 cent bonus for sending the fish to that particular buyer.

Man: And he would pay market price, plus the bonus, which meant you were getting more money.

Tim DeGroat: And most places we dealt with after a while would supply you with crates. Because crates got to be a real hassle. I can remember paying a quarter for a box and the last time we bought a box it was a dollar and a half. Bushel baskets are a dollar and a half, you want bushel baskets, you pay a dollar and a half for a bushel basket.

Marguerite Holloway: And you'd keep shelling that out because you'd have to keep rigging it with.

Tim DeGroat: Well, we have a guy that gives us vegetable crates, bushel, bushel and a half, they work out really good.

Man: Wooden crates.

Tim DeGroat: And we do get some bushels.

Marguerite Holloway: Were you ever down at Fulton Fish Market did you see a place where they set aside to bone the shad?

Tim DeGroat: Oh, sure. We used to watch them.

Marguerite Holloway: What was that like?

Tim DeGroat: Those guys were tremendous. We had a fellow there. He was going to get married, he was going to get married in say the middle of the shad season. Sam talked the guy out of getting, holding his wedding off, that he would pay for his wedding and his honeymoon if he would hold off his wedding until after the fileting season. And so he did. This guy, those guys down there were great. I mean, they were good. He said, you want to see how your fish is taken care of? Go over to those guys, just like that. I mean, he'd make a few motions here and there and that fish was fileted.

Marguerite Holloway: So

Tim DeGroat: Of course he had splitters. He had people that would, they would roe it first, they would cut them out, take the roes out and then take the heads off and split them, he had two halves. I mean he was all set up. And just as fast as you could hand them to him, he could filet them. This guy was good. He got $1.00 a fish.

Man: Completely boneless.

Tim DeGroat: He probably got a dollar a fish for every fish he did. Sam told me, or the guy told us, he said, Sam asked me if I could postpone my wedding that he would pay for my wedding and my honeymoon if I would stay with Sam in the market.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you remember his name? The really good.

Tim DeGroat: No, I can't. But they were good.

Marguerite Holloway: Sort of like an assembly line, one person would do one thing, one the next.

Tim DeGroat: The same with founder. I used to watch them filet flounder down there it was on a reel line, filet flounder.

Man: Most guys down there would have a clam knife and they would open a roe shad just like that. And never once nick an egg. The egg sacs would come out intact.

Tim DeGroat: The only people better, I've seen down at the Market are the people that we deal with. That's a family and they take pride in what they do. And they start their kids off when they're about 10 or 12 years old, teaching them. And the guy that came here, I mean he could filet shad like that.

Marguerite Holloway: What's their name?

Tim DeGroat: Marino, Devin Marino, Dill Seafood down in Bridgetown, New Jersey That's a four hour ride from here one way by truck it's 5 hours and they would come all the way up here but we have prize fish. Jumbo shad. I just to use bigger nets, catch bigger shad. I'd catch shad bigger than Bobby Gabrielson just for that reason. Bobby would get all the small ones, I'd get all the big ones. I used 6 and a half inch mesh just to get all prime. [crosstalk] The smallest shad I would catch would be 6 pounds. [crosstalk] about the time he walked in that cooler and saw 3000 pounds of roe in there and the smallest one was 6 pounds.

Marguerite Holloway: What did he say?

Man: We would fish 5-1/4 or 5-1/2 inch 5-5/8 inch mesh would be the biggest years ago that they would use for shadding. And then we found out that you just go bigger on the mesh, omit the buck shad, less handling, less time and you caught better roes. Have you ever looked at the eggs out of the roe out of each fish as like a Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas.

Marguerite Holloway: No, I've just seen the roe here.

Man: Well, the roe here are tremendous. They're very large.

Tim DeGroat: They all admit that.

Man: And the roe out of the fish from Florida, Georgia and like South Carolina would be like the size of your fingers.

Tim DeGroat: Ours are prime, the prime stage. They had some pretty nice looking ones when you get to the Carolinas, almost the same as our, but they were mature. When you get to here the water's just prime.

[TIMESTAMP 1:15:00]

Tim DeGroat: They get the prime shad.

Man: Our eggs, when you open them up they're like a golden brown color. Those southern eggs, like Florida and Georgia, they were blood red, they weren't top quality eggs. But the people were waiting for them and they were the first eggs, so they flooded the market.

Tim DeGroat: We just to live about forsythia time, everybody told me that the big shad didn't come until the end of the season. I said well there's got to be something wrong because we get big shad mixed in with the little ones. I put that 6-1/2 inch mesh on, all big shad, all big shad, no garbage, all good stuff. I've sent tons of that upstairs too. My loft is loaded, I could go from here to the George Washington

Bridge if I wanted to, that's how much net we've got. You see the nails on the wall behind you? And the nails on the other end.

Marguerite Holloway: Yes.

Tim DeGroat: That's where you string the nets across to send them in. I've got net up there is skeins still in the crate, they've never been simmed in yet, just sitting there. Can't use it, because it's bass net. I've got barrels and barrels of net. I say I, like me and my partners. I've got barrels of net upstairs in the attic here, tons of that upstairs. No sense in buying anymore. I use what I got for shad. I throw a couple of nets in just for local. I've got local customers and weekend buyers here. We get those Indian people come.

Man: India, Pakistanis

Tim DeGroat: They buy fish like you wouldn't believe. I asked, how come you buy so much, it's a staple of life, on the Ganges River they catch a smaller one and fatter than ours, they get more fat content. But they love it. They buy them here, you wouldn't believe how they buy fish. I keep a couple of nets in just to keep it for the weekend and I've got a few fish markets I sell crabs to that want to take but it's not part of the big time.

Marguerite Holloway: So you're going do a little bit this season.

Tim DeGroat: That's all, yeah, a couple of nets.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you ever see women buying shad down at Fulton Fish Market?

Tim DeGroat: No never see women down there. That's a tough place. You ever been at Fulton Fish Market?

Man: I saw a woman

Tim DeGroat: Would you want to work down there? I've never seen women down there. I don't I've ever seen women at Fulton Fish Market.

Man: I saw one woman handler one time down there, must have been a family deal.

Tim DeGroat: Maybe.

Marguerite Holloway: So there's a guy up in Poughkeepsie I think, Raymond Menard who said that he learned how to bone from a woman in Fulton Fish Market. But no one

Tim DeGroat: Ray, what's his last name?

Marguerite Holloway: Menard.

Tim DeGroat: I wonder if that's the Ray that we know come here to work on the boat.

Man: Where's he from?

Marguerite Holloway: Poughkeepsie.

Tim DeGroat: I never took interest in it, not only that, I've never had the time. If I had time to sit and bone, I wasn't catching any fish. So I never really fully learned how to bone a shad, I couldn't care less. People come and say, do you want to bone me a shad? I say you want to bone a shad, go the fish market. I don't bone shad. I don't clean no more, You want a fish, you can take it the way it is. I don't even clean them. I hired a guy, worked here 12, 15 hours a day, all he did was clean fish. That was before they took the stripers away. I'd have people waiting in line I'd come in with the boats and our rain gear they would buy almost every striper that we had on board. That's how many people here were, such a demand for them.

Man: I used to fish off the sea wall over here before we had this, right where you turned in, right along the sea wall and I was getting 75 cents a piece for roe shad. And I stood on the wall over there one day and cleaned roe shad for people, they wanted the fish and the egg, they wanted it scaled and beheaded and the entrails taken out. And just on the wall one day I sold $186 worth of fish before I got packed and went home. And at 50 and 75 cents a fish, it was a lot of fish to clean.

Tim DeGroat: We catch a lot of fish that had a [unclear] on it like a hoist on it, we had fish tubs take a run on the boat with the fish tubs, swing around and around as a conveyor, we'd take them over there, weigh them on the scale and just dump them on the floor over there. We didn't even put them in crates, dump them off or put ice on them and when the truck comes he backs over here on the ramp, we'd load them on the wheelbarrow and he'd put them in the back of a refrigerated truck and he'd put ice on them. They'd spread out of the floor, they'd stay nice and froze quick.

[TIMESTAMP 1:20:00]

Man: And the ice came from a local ice skating rink.

Marguerite Holloway: It did?

Man: When they would clean the ice skating rink

Tim DeGroat: Shaved ice.

Man: They shaved the ice and we would go over and get that. The ice skating rink isn't there anymore.

Tim DeGroat: They gave up last year, now if I want to buy ice it's $20 some a cake.

Marguerite Holloway: How big is a cake of ice?

Tim DeGroat: 300 pounds. We might go through 10 of them in about three days. I'll stick with my crabs, not shad. They'll have to – can't say it on tape. Like it tell that guy and called this year to get him off Bobby, Bobby says he doesn't fish and I'm not going to. I'm not worrying about no big trade. My shad fishing days, for all intents and purposes are over. If they were to give the stripers back, that would be a different question.

Man: If they'd give the stripers back

Tim DeGroat: He'd even be out there working.

Man: I'd be out there, I couldn't do the work, but I'd hire a crew. I was forced to retire with heart problems, so I couldn't do that lifting, but I'd have a crew out there. Still haven't lost it in my fingers. I can make and mend net and send net in as well as anybody.

Marguerite Holloway: That's great.

Tim DeGroat: Yeah, my father and his uncle. My father and his father taught us both, taught me how to make nets, how to sim nets, how to prepare nets. His father kept me in business one spring. Oh you should have heard that, oh, god it was awful.

Marguerite Holloway: What happened?

Tim DeGroat: We used to space net, like you said space nets, on a Friday morning you had to have the nets off by 6:00. So the tide happened to be 3:00 in the morning. We went out, we got a boatload of fish, I had one guy with me, Old Chuck. So what we do when we're going to take the nets off, we would bring the bottom ring up and tie a loop in it so the net wouldn't drop down anymore and start fishing all over again. You know, when we got all done hauling the fish, we would go back on the end sure net when the tide slacked off and we'd take the nets off one at a time. Meanwhile the tide was dropping down, right, the nets can't go all the way down, naturally the water drops off, the nets are going to come up out of the water. So I said to Chuck, gee Chuck, I'm awful tired, why don't we take this load of fish in, I'll load, we had an awful lot of fish, I said, and we'll get some coffee and maybe get an hour of sleep, tide won't be too strong, even with space nets, even with ebb tide strong, it wouldn't hurt anything anyway. We'll come back and take the nets off. Now you're talking, I don't know how many nets I had, 1200 feet of net. So we did, we come in, unloaded the boat, it was the old boat house. We had some coffee, I had a coffee pot here. We curled up on the floor on a couple of old raincoats and looked like a big old bear there falling asleep. I got up against the stove, propped my feet up I'm catching flies, sound asleep. Next thing I wake up, the sun's shining. Oh jeez Chuck, we'd better get out and get those nets or we'll be getting a ticket. We got in the boat, we got around the turn and I looked and oh, my god, what is that what I see. A 1200 foot beaver dam, everything that was out on the river got caught in it. Oh my god, Chuck, I'm going to cut them loose and let them go. "Oh, no! We'll pick them out." This was Friday, I had to have the nets ready for Sunday. So we cut them loose on one end and I'm driving them upriver, looking like wood, straw, we brought them in here. There was him here, my brothers, my father, my uncle Eddie. They were starting to pick them out. There was so much wood, it would take you 3 hours to get one net clean. So I had some old net. Uncle Eddie says, you got any net. He sat in that boathouse, over the weekend, he took say 20 feet off this one and 40 feet on that one, and he sewed them together. He put me back in business by the time Sunday came. We only had about 4 nets. I took the rest, piled them up here and emptied them out at my convenience. But he saved my bacon that weekend. He took one of them old nets, sat there right in the chair, cut them all out, simmed them all back together and got my net and got me back fishing by Sunday. He could sit in the boat out there. My father could do the same thing and they've done it. They'd get drifting and the boat would come up and the guy wouldn't get out of the way and they'd cut the net right in half. They'd get two boats pulled together. Take the middle of the one. They're still fishing on either side and sew the net back together, cut it out, repair it and let go back overboard while they were still fishing.

Marguerite Holloway: That's amazing.

Tim DeGroat: Those old timers were sharp.

Marguerite Holloway: I've never heard of that.

[TIME STAMP 1:25:00]

Man: Sew the net together while the boats are still fishing.

Marguerite Holloway: Did you guys ever have to do that? Did you do that?

Tim DeGroat: No I've had to repair them on the beach but I've never had. He saved my bacon that weekend, your father did.

Marguerite Holloway: How long did it take him to do all that? It sounds like an enormous amount of work.

Man: Pretty fast.

Tim DeGroat: You'd be surprised how fast he could put a net together. I could take and make a 200 footer. If you left me alone, see you sew both sides, two men, one guy can work that side, one guy can work this side. But if you left me alone and I wanted to put my mind to it, I could start from scratch I could completely do a 200 foot shot of net in probably 2 hours.

Marguerite Holloway: Knitting the whole thing?

Tim DeGroat: The whole thing.

Marguerite Holloway: Sewing it in.

Man: You have to hang it on the lines, 4 on 12. I can do it in 2 hours.

Marguerite Holloway: Wow.

Tim DeGroat: We sat he one winter, sewed in 4000 feet of net. Shad and striper net.

Man: Down in my basement I can do 35 foot lift at one time and I made net for everybody. I made net for Leo Burn. I made net for John Burn.

Tim DeGroat: The Stolys.

Man: For Stolys. I made net for your father, I made net for me. And that's all I would do, all day long. Was just set nets in on the top and bottom lines.

Tim DeGroat: We'll probably do a few nets here this winter. I've got to make a couple of more bunker nets.

Marguerite Holloway: If you don't mind having someone watch you when you do that, you should let me know, give a call.

Tim DeGroat: It was just a spur of the moment.

Man: Just to get out of the house in the evening after dinner. Come down and do a few nets, the boys all sit here, maybe have a beer.

Tim DeGroat: I swear, it looks like it wants to cloud up and snow or something.

Man: It's supposed to tonight and tomorrow I think.

[discussion about the weather]

Tim DeGroat: When it was cold it would stay cold. This is Florida weather. We've still got 5 months before I get back on the water with crab. January, February, March, three months until we get back on the water for shad, five months before the crabs.

Marguerite Holloway: Do you think because the weather is so warm the shad will get here early.

Tim DeGroat: What will come back early?

Marguerite Holloway: The shad.

Tim DeGroat: No. Might be a week but that's it. They'll be here, same time every year. You can set your clock on them.

Man: Usually between the 10th and the 15th of April would you say is about the beginning of the season. Could be a week early or could be a week later.

Tim DeGroat: One year I got 900 pounds, I kept some records in March 28th and then I didn't see another shad for almost 2 weeks after that.

Man: We caught them on the 8th of April one year, a whole lot of shad.

Tim DeGroat: I shipped shad a lot of times on the 5th of 7th of April. Then other years you don't ship anything until around the 12th or 13th after my birthday. It's all according to the weather. The water temperature. The water temperature has a lot to do with it. They'll move when the water temperature climbs up and all that snow melt. That's what lures them into the river, that smell. Fish can smell for hundreds of miles. I saw a thing on channel 13 about fish, they have a tremendous sense of smell. And that's what lures them in to the different rivers. What we call an ordinary old sucker. What makes that sucker been able to come out of the ocean all the way up this river, and know enough to make the turn right here. And knows enough to go into that creek. All water smell.

Man: They've proven that out with the salmon but they never tried it with any other fish.

Tim DeGroat: You see it with the crabs, my god what a tremendous amount of crabs was around this river last summer. Last fall, before we quit, we were getting crabs the size of a silver dollar by the thousands in the boat. We were scooping them out of the boat. [unclear] mud in this winter, come spring they'll be nice, they shed once or twice.

Marguerite Holloway: How big will they get in the course of a year?

Tim DeGroat: Crab sheds about once every two weeks. Male crab will shed 30 times in his life.

Man: Did you ever watch a crab when it shed?

[TIME STAMP 1:30:00]

Marguerite Holloway: No.

Man: I would say they grow by a third.

Tim DeGroat: At a certain stage they grow by half and then by a third I'd say.

Marguerite Holloway: Each time they moult?

Man: You take a crab this size.

Marguerite Holloway: Like 3 inches.

Man: It moults out and he'll be this big,

Marguerite Holloway: 6 inches, doubles in size.

Man: He's almost folded up in there and then grows. When the soft shell comes out and you put it by the shell you say, that crab didn't come out of that shell, and it did. When it comes out of there, his body expands. Then he gets hard shelled again and grows.

Tim DeGroat: The life expectancy is only two years. They moult a lot. The silver dollar size crabs, by July next year they'll be number 2 and number 1 crabs.

Man: Crab eggs are the size of a grain of salt. And they grow to this size.

Tim DeGroat: In less than two years.

Man: Less than two years, you figure, that's a lot of growing.

Marguerite Holloway: So that whole good crop that you saw those young ones means that you'll have a very good season, that's great.

Tim DeGroat: If they survive. A lot of the old ones probably mudded in too, a lot of the females.

Man: There's so many things to take into consideration. Pollution, the ph of the water.

Tim DeGroat: Freeze up worry about getting above freeze up, but I don't think you're going to freeze up this year.

Man: Freeze out is the crabs go in the mud, they go in deep water fine, they go in shallow water and they get an off shore wind that drops the water down. You can see the mud flats here for 50, 75, 100 feet out, all those crabs will die.

Tim DeGroat: You get anchor ice too, when the wind is blowing so hard that the water freezes before it has a chance to drop back down and that just acts like slush.

Man: The water honeycombs and it just.

Tim DeGroat: It'll lower the temperature of the water so severe that it will freeze the crabs out. I think that's what's happened too over here. You have severe winters. The last five years we haven't had any

severe winters. Like you said, when you go from 26 inches of ice on this river to no ice, and the stuff from all them power plants.

END OF RECORDING

Marguerite Holloway: They were tagged in Nova Scotia.

Tim DeGroat: So, it just shows to go ya they move around.

Man: They just happened to get in with this school and follow it and they don't come back to their own river, just a few.

Tim DeGroat: Well, only a few that we know of. [crosstalk] They were all excited about it because I caught a fish that was let go down in Maryland, Ocean City. He tagged it in March and we caught it the end of April.

Man: That fish did some traveling.

Tim DeGroat: It traveled 700 miles in X amount of – 700 or 800 miles in so many days, I forget how long.

Marguerite Holloway: That's amazing.

Tim DeGroat: They move.

Man: They're fast, I forget how fast they are but shad are pretty fast fish in the water.

Tim DeGroat: You get slack water out there are we happen to be going back and I know you have and you get one in there that just hit it and he'd really be slapping that water, a female be slapping that water, she's moving a mile a minute to get out of that, push that net like that really go fast. Well, I suppose I should get up to the house. The old lady will think I'm boozing it up in the bar and chasing women.

Man: I don't have to worry, my wife went to a party today up in Newburgh, she won't be back even for dinner this evening, so, I'll get lunch somewhere.

Tim DeGroat; She's the one who reminded me about this interview. I was at work and I stopped at the coffee shop and she said, don't forget that woman's coming.

END OF INTERVIEW