

Christopher Letts: In the old days when you paid your crews, when did you pay them? Did you pay them at the end of the season, or weekly, or how did that go?

Ron Ingold: However they wanted it, weekly if they wanted it weekly. Usually they all wanted it at the end of the season.

Christopher Letts: They wanted a lump sum at the end. So that policy really hasn't changed too much?

Ron Ingold: No. What time is it?

Christopher Letts: Yeah, it's 10 to 10.

Ron Ingold: I see boats over there, we've got to get some shit over on the beach (crosstalk)

Christopher Letts: The tide's out.

Ron Ingold: The tide's all the way out.

Christopher Letts: I've never seen one like that on the Hudson River

Ron Ingold: [unclear] fishbox

Christopher Letts: I was going to say that looks like a Caribbean craft, like something from the islands. The way they fold up like in a box like that. You know, everything nice and neat and compact. I've caught them down there in the Caribbean like that, quite a bit like that. One of the things that I think you have to deal with that the anchor net people and the gill net people don't have to deal with, maybe one of the reasons that there isn't as much pole fishing, is poles.

Ron Ingold: Um hm.

Christopher Letts: That's always been a problem, right?

Ron Ingold: Yeah.

Christopher Letts: What kind of wood makes good poles?

Ron Ingold: Hickory.

Christopher Letts: What about oak?

Ron Ingold: It splinters.

Christopher Letts: It splinters. How long will a good hickory pole last?

Ron Ingold: 30, 40 years [unclear]

Christopher Letts: Is that right. You get to know your poles?

Ron Ingold: Yeah.

Christopher Letts: The individual poles?

Ron Ingold: Um hm. You know them by the tops. You get to know them by the base.

Christopher Letts: What's the length of the poles you use?

Ron Ingold: Right now we're using 45-50 foot poles. Years ago we used 40 footers up to 75 foot poles. Clayton used up to 110 foot poles if you saw them over on the scow stand that's the ones where, you see where the splice hole.

Christopher Letts: You've still got some of those?

Ron Ingold: [unclear] of them yeah, over there, just laying in the mud.

Christopher Letts: By your scow, over here? Up to 100 feet?

Ron Ingold: Um hm.

Christopher Letts: How on earth would you set a pole like that?

Ron Ingold: [unclear] 0:04:34.0 that's how we did it.

Christopher Letts: Winch them down? Winch them down into the mud?

Ron Ingold: Yep.

Christopher Letts: You couldn't jump a pole like that in.

Ron Ingold: No. We used to.

Christopher Letts: So, out of a 100 foot pole, how much would be in the mud?

0:05:00.7 Ron Ingold: 16 foot in the mud, you figure about 8 foot above high water, at least 8 foot.

Christopher Letts: Was he setting an extra long row? Or just fishing deep water?

Ron Ingold: Yeah.

Christopher Letts: Is deep water that much more productive?

Ron Ingold: Yeah, down there it was, fishing down by the Lincoln Tunnel, just north of it.

Christopher Letts: How deep a net would he fish?

Ron Ingold: He fished 80 meshes.

Christopher Letts: 80 meshes. I don't think I've ever heard of anyone fishing that much. You fished 60?

Ron Ingold: 75 we used to fish the first row or two. We'd fish up to the 65. Now we don't have the men so we're cutting down on the deeper nets.

Christopher Letts: Is that where you run into trouble? On the deeper nets?

Ron Ingold: It's harder to pick, you know. Run the equipment to get the net out and get the fish out of the net, you know. The shallower net tends to pick fish clear up easier.

Christopher Letts: So you had to buy poles this year. How much did you have to pay for the poles?

Ron Ingold: \$2700

Christopher Letts: For how many poles?

Ron Ingold: 30

Christopher Letts: Wow, cost 100 bucks a pop. Did that include transportation?

Ron Ingold: No.

Christopher Letts: These came from upstate New York?

Ron Ingold: Yeah. Shad bark and hickory.

Christopher Letts: The white oak doesn't cut it? Charlie used to say white oak but I guess I knew hickory was always the best. If you keep them mudded in they last for a lot of years. A lifetime of fishing.

Ron Ingold: [unclear] 0:07:11.3 on the bottom, yellow pine she's as good as new. You talking to Dave Beggs, he went that old clipper built back in 1846, [unclear] 0:07:29.9 raised there in the Bucklands there

Christopher Letts: Buckland Islands?

Ron Ingold: Trying to get it back to the South Street Seaport Museum, it was donated to them. A three masted clipper, one of the Yankee Clippers. And the hull started shaking.

Christopher Letts: Because it was made out of hickory?

Ron Ingold: Yellow pine.

Christopher Letts: Yellow pine.

Ron Ingold: Probably hickory and oak ribbing. The last time she was sailed was 1906.

Christopher Letts: What about the trends in catches over the years? You know, from what you've seen and what you've heard your father and Truax and Floyd talk about. There must have been some tremendous fluctuations.

Ron Ingold: About turn of the century 27 fish was considered a large lift.

Christopher Letts: What would that be, fishing the same rows?

Ron Ingold: Um hm.

Christopher Letts: 27 fish. What kind of a price would you get for fish then?

Ron Ingold: You'd get a quarter a fish. 10 cents a fish [unclear] 0:08:43.2

Christopher Letts: They were fishing with a big crew?

Ron Ingold: They were fishing with three men [unclear 0:08:52.9] in those boats with three men, you know. That was the [unclear 0:09:10.6]

Christopher Letts: I took some of that. I hope you're not getting a cold. I took some of that cold medicine. I don't think it's taken effect yet. Have you got any idea why they caught so few fish back then?

Ron Ingold: More of a cycle.

Christopher Letts: Yeah.

Ron Ingold: Figure, yeah.

Christopher Letts: Were there a lot of people fishing then?

Ron Ingold: No, not that many. 1930s they started to come in, it started to get heavy and that's when you saw a lot of fishermen, late 1920s, early 1930s.

Christopher Letts: 1930s were the boom years for the fishery.

Ron Ingold: 1930s, yeah.

Christopher Letts: But since the war it's been a steady reduction in the number of fishermen, would you say?

0:10:03.8 Ron Ingold: Yes.

Christopher Letts: Do you think that has anything to do with the fact that the shad population seems to be building?

Ron Ingold: I think so, yeah. [unclear] 0:10:14.1

Christopher Letts: When people caught fewer fish, did they tend to fish harder? Put more net on?

Ron Ingold: They tried putting more net on, yeah. Well, that was their life. That was their 6 to 8 weeks and that's all they did and it's something that you've got to really dedicate yourself to do. You know, in those certain amount of weeks.

Christopher Letts: These guys were, you said that was their life, they weren't doing that and nothing else to make a living?

Ron Ingold: Oh, yeah, a lot of them around here they

Christopher Letts: They lived for shad season?

Ron Ingold: They lived for shad season but they had other jobs. My father, my brother, myself, you know.

AUD\_2014\_0007 Ron Ingold Edgewater NJ interviewed by Christopher Letts 1984-04-11. Transcribed 2018 by Carla Lesh, Hudson River Maritime Museum

Christopher Letts: Do you tend to put less net on if there's more fish?

Ron Ingold: Yes. Weight can't handle it.

Christopher Letts: You'd cut down to, well, if you've got 30 poles, is that what you're after on these rows, 30 spaces?

Ron Ingold: Yeah, you're not even going to have that really.

Christopher Letts: So what if you've got a glut of fish, you'd take a shot of net off?

Ron Ingold: Yeah. I'd cut off about 4 or 5 spaces, you know. You can only catch so much, you can only work yourself so hard, you know. You can only work for so long.

END OF TAPE