Interview with Barbara Merry

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

Abstract

On September 23, 2007, Millie Rahn interviewed Barbara Merry as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Documentation Project. Barbara describes her childhood, noting that she'd been surrounded by boats her whole life. Her father owned a wholesale/retail marine company, and she grew up on a wooden cruising boat. She gravitated toward tying knots and starting selling her macramé to make a little extra money. Once macramé went out of fashion, she tried several other crafts before finding Ahsley's *Book of Knots* and began knotting. After her divorce, she was able to transform this hobby into a career, and eventually published a book *The Splicing Handbook: Techniques for Modern and Traditional Ropes*. Barbara describes the artistry involved in tying a knot, as well as their critical importance on boats. In addition to her work, she loves sharing her knowledge with other people, and describes teaching a rope work and wire splicing class to marines, detailing the techniques and skills she helps them learn. Barbara promotes herself by attending boat shows and festivals, where she runs a popular booth, but she describes the increasing difficulties involved with attending. She has customers from all over the world, and has found a niche crafting rope fenders. One knot she's especially proud of is the chest becket, a complicated knot used to secure a sailor's chest during the whaling era. Barbara reflects on the gender dynamics in the industry, noting that she's seen marked improvements. Over the years, she was able to find male mentors who respected and encouraged her, and learned to avoid those who had bad manners. She describes the rope making process and the business aspects to her work. Barbara ends with a hope that with greater exposure, the negative stereotypes associated with the fishing industry will change.

Millie Rahn: All right. We are recording. Today is Sunday, September 23, 2007. My name is Millie Rahn. I'm the folklorist doing the oral history interview, here at the Working Waterfront Festival with Barbara Merry, who is a rigger from Rhode Island. Barbara, why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself? Give us your full name, a little bit about where, when you were born, and how you got into what you're doing now.

Barbara Merry: OK. Very good. Well, my name is Barbara [Guarino?] Merry. The middle name is a family name. I was born in Spokane, Washington on the west coast. I was raised in southern California, in Newport Beach, to be exact. Now, my father owned a wholesale/retail marine company. So, I've been around the boats all my life. But, not the kind of boats that are in New Bedford [chuckles]. They're cousins to the boats I'd been on. I was raised on a wood boat, a cruising boat, not a fishing boat, not a sailboat, a cruising boat. So that's my background with the sea. My father taught me as a young girl how to cook on the boat. So, when I go boating I'm always the most popular one, because I can get down there in that galley and I can whip up some little delicacies out of seemingly *nothing*! But my love of course is the ropes, and knotting. Ropework. Probably, you could say I got my start in macramé. I just needed that extra little and—all the women out here, they know what it is. It's that pin money, that extra money. The men know what it is. A *little* bit of extra money in their wallet. I did macramé for years and years and years. When macramé died I tried *weaving,* I tried *caning*. I just loved that little bit of pin money. But I kept—well, my hands got wet, and I didn't like that. Or, my back hurt, because the loom was—you know, you could only sit one way. And, I…the macramé, you know, you could stuff it in your purse and do it in the doctor's office. So I kept wanting to go back to the—To make a long story short I got Ashley's *Book of Knots* which many of the other knotters know. It's their bible. I started on page one and went through the whole book. I started out really working on my own after a divorce. What I didn't want to do is have my daughter come home to an empty house. So I said, you know, I want to be there when she comes busting through the door to tell me all the news of her day. And that's what started me with working on my own out of my house, doing rope work and knot work. [03:05]

MR: How did you get from California to Rhode Island?

BM: It was the second marriage, that didn't work.

MR: OK. You're in…?

BM: I'm actually in a small marina in what they call Snug Harbor. Now I just love the New England architecture. It's so interesting compared to the cookie cutter California architecture. Although northern California, I have to say, is beautiful. But down in Snug Harbor, they tell me that I have to use the Wakefield post office.

MR: OK.

BM: So, it's 02879, which is in Wakefield. It's a town within a town.

MR: How long have you been there?

BM: Oh, twenty-five years, Millie. In the same little area. Twenty-five years, yup. I'm almost

sixty. So, half of my life I've been…just about half.

MR: And you call yourself the Marlin Spike Artist. That's your web address.

BM: That's right.

MR: marlinspikeartist.com.

BM: That's right.

MR: How did you come to dub yourself that?

BM: Well, it just seemed like the work was so interesting. Marlin is like the big fish and spike is like a big nail, and it kind of flowed off my tongue. So I went down to patent my name, you know, register my name as *marlinspike*, and they had one. So I—well, I'll just call myself an artist. And that's how it came to be. Now I didn't know what the heck a marlinspike *was* when I called myself that. But I know what it is now [laughs]. And it's a tool that the sailors used to splice wire.

MR: It's like a big needle isn't it?

BM: It's like a big, steel needle. Some of them are eight inches long. Some of them can be as long as two feet. [04:50]

MR: Now, you brought—I know this is on tape, but you brought some of your work. Can you talk about, kind of describe it, for people who can't see it?

BM: All right. First of all, I'm going to show you a trick knot.

MR: OK.

BM: All right. Now, I'm going to tell you—or teach you how to tie a knot, an overhand knot, without letting go of the ends. Because as you know, when you tie a knot, and you cross the ends, you do what—you cross it over because, it's not a knot unless it's tied crossed. So, in order to do that, I'm laying it here, making a big circle, putting one end over the top, letting go of it, laying it down, reaching *through* the hole and pulling it. Pulling, pulling, pulling, pulling. There you have an overhand knot. Now this is a little trick, now. So I want you to pretend, Millie [inaudible]. That you're going to imagine that. And I teach the kids, I say, you're going to say, "No, I don't want to do it! I don't want to do it!" All right. Now, I'm going to hand you, this—now keep your hands crossed. One underneath and one on top. Now. Just unfold your arms like a graceful bird…

MR: [inhale/exclamation of surprise] And there it is!

BM: And there it is! Your beautiful knot.

MR: [laughs]

BM: Now that's a trick knot. That's—And I get—People are very interested and then as they leave the booth I give them the string. Now, this little knot here is what I tie also in the booth and give away. It's just a little… This knot is a wonderful knot. I don't know the name of it. Because one day, at the booth, one of the men who tie knots came up. And he showed me how to tie this. I don't know the name of it! So I tie it now and give it away. It's for key chains. You might want to put it through your zipper. It's a wonderful luggage marker. You can tie it in different colors, different styles. And of course, it's too difficult for me to teach you while we're recording.

MR: Right.

BM: But if you want to stop by the booth I'm *happy, happy* to give lessons. It's one of the most special things I can do. It's just one of the most wonderful things that I can do is to teach. I—*really* excited. I made the cranes with Winnie…help me…

MR: Lambrecht.

BM: Lambrecht. And she and I were working really hard to find an apprentice for me.

MR: Winnie is the folklorist for Rhode Island, for the record. And, like many states here in New England, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts has apprenticeships with traditional artists like Barbara, to teach, usually younger people but not always, to carry on the tradition.

MR: One of the things I wanted to ask you for the record is, knots, and boats, and the water, all seem to go together. Can you talk a little bit about that? And how and why watermen need to know knots? And what they do?

BM: Mm hm. All right, first of all, we're start in the classroom. I'll pretend that I am that person who wants to go and work on the water. The first thing that that person needs to do is go get documented. *Somehow* they need a piece of paper before they can join the union. And I'm just going the most common way, to get on the most different kinds of boats, that I have had the pleasure and the honor to be a part of. The boats I'm talking about are ferry boats, tankers… The Coast Guard, they have their own system. But, it's called the Merchant Marines. That's what they are. They're kind of civil guys. They're not really army, they're not navy. But, for instance, when Jimmy Carter was president, he authorized sixteen or seventeen of these mobile landing boats. And at all times, they are circling the globe. They're going here, they're going here. They're going over there. They're just circling and circling in case they get called ashore. And they all have a unit of marines that actually lives on board. They're seals, they've got the big black boats, they can do stealthy work. And they're constantly, constantly, circling. They're constantly, constantly changing crews. Constantly. So, what the marine…. They're army. But the people that run the boat are the merchant mariners. They have to go to school. There's a school in Texas. There's a school down south in Virginia, or something like that. And they have to go through each one of these classes. Now I teach the rope work splicing and wire splicing class. And to make it short, you have to—before you pass the test—and I give a test on the last day, it takes a week, where, under time, they have to complete a three-strand splice. Both an eye splice and end-for-end splice. And thirteen other knots. Whether it's a lashing knot, or a loop knot. The loop knot might be the bowline. Are you familiar with the bowline knot? OK. That's a little knot that you tie, instantly it makes a loop. Now the other ones are lashing knots. That's

where, OK, I'm running over on deck and there's things rolling around on deck, and if I tie the correct knot, that I learned in school, that thing will never go flying again. And it's easy to untie. And, all my shipmates know that I used that specific knot. And they know how to tie it, even though they didn't tie it. So that's the absolute requirement. In my book, *The Splicing Handbook,* I have a chapter on those specific knots. So, if I was a fisherman, but I didn't go through the school, I might pick up one of the books and say, "OK, guys, now let's all get together here and decide what kind of knots we're going to use to tie down this kind of thing. Now does everybody know how to tie a bowline?" Because, the bowline can be untied. So, if you tie a loop knot [tying], like this, and it gets just, jammed, you can't untie it! But if you tie the bowline, [tying], no matter how tight it gets, it's got a little trigger mechanism. You just pull this heel back here. Pull this heel back here and it loosens it up. Some of them I've seen them whack them with a hammer, to get them loose. Because they get jammed that tight. So if they're all thinking about the same kind of knot—now if they tie a *square* knot the wrong way, it's a granny knot. The granny knots always come undone. So they want to know if they're tying a square knot the right way. You know, they've just got to know how to tie the knots the right way. Because otherwise they'll just come undone. You know, making any old knot. It's not going to work. So that's the consistency. That's how it would work on the boat. And, of course you always—like everything, Murphy's Law… You just don't ever expect it to happen but it does. And lives can be lost. [12:18]

MR: Now. Are there many women who do what you do?

BM: Yeah, The Splice Girls right here in New Bedford. They do a wonderful job of splicing.

MR: Yeah. How did you get into this work? You talked about your family connection…

BM: Yeah, the macramé. What it was is, I was greedy. I wanted that extra pin money. Then after the divorce, I didn't want to put my daughter back in day care. I wanted her—I wanted to be home. Even if it meant reduction in pay. Because I'm a purchasing agent. I'm a marine purchasing agent. I know every single piece of equipment that's on a boat. I know how the toilets work, the heads. Excuse me—the heads.

MR: [chuckles]

BM: I know navig—I know paint.

MR: So you already had—that was sort of what I was getting at. You already had connections in the industry.

BM: Yeah.

MR: So that you could market your work.

BM: Yeah. No, I had connections in the industry in California and Washington State. But when I moved out here, I just…pretty much was on my own.

MR: But you moved to a maritime community?

BM: Yeah, Marion. I moved to Marion.

MR: OK. Marion, Massachusetts?

BM: Yeah.

MR: OK.

BM: And I didn't think I was going to get a divorce. I thought I was going to be a professional homemaker. I was never prepared as a young woman to do anything else, but to make babies. Never was. So after the divorce…We got a divorce in London. We were stationed in London. I came home and go, "Oh, what do I do now?" You know? All I knew was the boats. So I started at a local marine store. And that's why I wanted that extra pin money, in California. You know? And then I got remarried. Didn't think I was ever going to have to do that again. I said—I didn't want to put her in day care again. It's interesting because, when she got her license—I always referred to it, and I referred to her as being weaned. You know, weaned?

MR: Mm hm.

BM: "OK, now honey, when you wean, you're going to have that car. I can go back to work." Well, by then, I was doing so well [chuckles] I didn't need to.

MR: Nice!

BM: Lucky.

MR: So you…

BM: So lucky!

MR: You do a variety—you teach.

BM: Mm hm

MR: You have your studio.

BM: That's right.

MR: You sell online.

BM: That's right. [14:55]

MR: And, do you have customers all over the country, or, even beyond?
BM: Yes. I have more customers all over the country. A lot of it—like I said, I've been lucky. I was able to write the book. And it's a *wonderful* thing to have word of mouth. But it's not quite enough. I do *all* the boat shows. I did all the boat shows until this year, because, Dave, my sweetie, his mom is eighty-seven and my mom's eighty- eight. I can't commit to a four-day boat show anymore. Not until I know that they're really safe. Not until I know that I won't be called

out of the boat show. They're *awful* expensive.

MR: Yes.

BM: They're *awful* expensive. And you know, I'm pushing sixty. And they're *awful* hard work.

MR: What kind of… Your customers, what do they come to you looking for? What are they…

BM: The main thing I affectionately call myself—and this may sound like a putdown, but it's an affectionate name that I call myself. I am the Fender Queen of America. All the tugboats that got those big, bushy beards on the front of them? I just found a specialty market. And I do a lot of fenders, a lot of rope fenders. Then I might have sold a chest becket to somebody who showed it to somebody and they might want one.

MR: Can you explain what a chest becket is?

BM: Yes. This is a chest becket [showing]. This is the hardest thing that can be tied, the most complicated thing to be tied. It went on the chest, the sailor's chest, during the whaling era. Everything in that little—not little, but—well they were, small stature, they put it in their chest. They would put it on the board underneath their bunk. Whether they had a bunk or a hammock. Everything in their life was in that. Because, as many people know, whaling voyages lasted as long as four years. One of their marks of skill would be how fancy the handle was on each side of their sailor's chest.

MR: I was going to say, it's kind of an occupational display. It's also decorative. But it shows their level of skill.

BM: That's right. It's like their badge. It's like a badge of honor. They're very difficult to tie.

MR: That's a *very* nice piece!

BM: Mmmm. It probably took me…a hundred and eight hours to make a pair. During this part here, I kept finding myself holding my breath. Because these were not sold. I was just doing it because I read over and over and over again that, in order to be a master—and I would never call myself a master *ever*—but in order to be that, you *have* to be able to tie these. So. That's why I think I could be so *valuable* in this teaching. Because I can teach *every* knot, from just your simple trick knot, all the occupational knots, how to splice the wire, *all* the knots in the book, all the way up to the becket. And this is the crowning—this is like the jewel in the crown. And I've tied, probably ten pair. [18:12]

MR: Now how many knots do you think there are? Or do you know?

BM: In Ashley's *Book of Knots* there's just about fifteen hundred. But some of them— say, for instance, in chapter three, he'll tell you how to do an overhand knot, holding the string, as a trick, in chapter three—that might be chapter three, the trick. But in chapter four, he'll—or chapter one, he'll go the simple knots. This is an overhand knot. In order to do it, this is it. This is a figure eight knot. But in another chapter, it might be something like, well, you use a figure eight know

in a rabbit's snare, to put around the little tree so that it goes but it doesn't go. So that's twice that it's been… So there's probably a thousand different knots.

MR: Wow!

BM: I don't have them all memorized. I mean I would never say I have them all memorized, but. But I certainly can tie most of them.

MR: Now we're focusing this year at the festival on women in the industry. What have your observations been about, you know—you're on and off boats, you're at boat shows—what are the gender differences? Do you think they're significant?

MB: Well, I've seen significant improvements. I myself am kind of tight-lipped. I would call myself a curmudgeon almost. So when I go into, say—I decided one day…I'll relate to you an actual experience. I decided one day that I wanted to splice, learn how to splice really big rope. And since, of course, my funds—I couldn't buy big rope to practice. Because there was a lot of down time coming up to this. You have a lot of down time. I tried to learn stuff during the down time. In other words, the time when I wasn't working for money. So I went over to Providence Steamboat. Now I had known Captain Wheeler previously, because he gave me some really nice tips. There are people that are teaching, then there are people who will *not* teach. And Captain Wheeler was one of those great guys who just, kind of felt the same way I did. He's so proud of his work, and he consented—if I'd come over, on time when he was working on them, I could watch him. So I did. And he didn't seem to care what my gender was. So to make a long story short, I went back to him, and I said, "You know, Captain Wheeler, I know you got old double braid around here. Why don't you let me try and put an eye or two in it? And then you can reuse it." Well the idea of reusing the rope kind of got to him, you know. "Well OK, sure, sure, sure." So I stepped up—I came out and I had my tools. I didn't really know what I was doing. So I was pretty quiet, because I didn't even know if I could finish it. But I knew some tips that I picked up, to do used rope. *Half* of the guys were hesitant. But they were doing what the captain said. The other ones, to tell you the truth they were pretty obnoxious. "Ah, you can't splice that! If you could splice that we would have…" I said, "[inaudible]. You know, you're probably right. But let's try." Rather than [makes a talking gesture?].

MR: Right.

BM: They don't want to hear the talking. They want to see the work. I just rolled up my sleeves and I said, "All right, put that there. Put that there. I think we want to do that. Yup, that's what we want to do. What do you guys think about that? And I'd let them input on stuff that wasn't important, just to, kind of, make them feel good.

MR: Mm hm.

BM: We finished the splice. The guys that were good—I think a lot of it is how they treat their mom, their mom taught them how to treat people. They—you know, "Boy! That wasn't too hard! You know I really didn't think you could do it!" And then there were the obnoxious ones who just like, turned on their heels and walked away. You've got to—after a while, if you get skilled with your work, *then* you start looking at the people. Because you're good at what you're doing. "Oh, I think he's…He reminds me of that guy that I ran into at Providence Steamboat. I think

he's going to be a little tough, so. I think I'll go find someone else." And you get—your antennae go up. You start figuring out. He's kind of—not very nice, I'm going to… Now that guy over there, I think his mom taught him some manners, because he said please and thank you. Little things like that. But, I've seen people like Donna, who's the absolute salt of the earth…

MR: Donna…?

BM: Donna from Splice Girls. [Donna Goodwin.] She's the salt of the earth. Her whole entire family has been in fishing. She's been splicing since she was seven years old. This is her turf. She's familiar with the people, and she probably knows everybody since she was little.
But starting out is tough. Starting out is tough. [23:45]

MR: You mentioned your tools. What kind of tools do you use?

BM: I just love my work, Millie. I am so…

MR: I know you do! [laughs]

BM: I am probably the luckiest woman in the world. Basically, most of my tools can go in what the sailors call a ditty bag. It's probably six inches across, four inches wide, and about eight inches tall. Imagine an occupational, industrial, necessary job, where you can walk down the pier, or walk onto a theater, walk up to an arborist, with all of your tools in your pocketbook. Am I not the luckiest woman in the world?

MR: Mm hm.

BM: I paid my dues! I paid my dues. But I sure am reaping now… Oh, I'm not kidding [chuckles].

MR: [laughs] When people see you at festivals like this, do they comment on you being a woman, doing what you're doing? Because when they see your work it's spectacular.

BM: No. I never heard anyone comment. They might say something walking away. [knocking/MR talking to person who comes in about people waiting for next interview]

MR: So you were talking about your tools, and your bag and how lucky you are to do what you're doing.

BM: Mm hm. Fantastic. It's a wonderful, wonderful craft. But there are times, when…say I'll have to—you know how piers are?

MR: Mm hm.

BM: And the homeowner might call me up and he'll say, "I want a rope railing." And I say, "Oh, OK." So I go out and I measure the job and we talk about the different knots because he always has to have a fancy knot on one end. Then it goes through the holes. Then another fancy knot on the other end. Well—the catenary is the bend in the rope. Now, if he wants it straight I have to

take come alongs and some of the other power tools, in order to get it really tight and nice. But, for the most part, just that little bag.

MR: A come along? What is that?

BM: A come along is a ratcheting device. You hook it on and you go ratchet, ratchet, ratchet, ratchet, and it pulls. It pulls. It's not electric. You hook it onto something and you ratchet [makes ratcheting noise] and I hook it onto the rope so the rope is tight, tight, tight. And then I tie the knot. And then I let the come along off. And then the knot sits on the pole.

MR: So, that's where a lot of your artistry comes in. In that, they're not working knots, on the working boats, but they're in someone's yard, or…

BM: Mm hm. Yeah that's a very good point. I never looked at it that way. That's a good point. They say that rope-making in the factories—the rope-making itself—is a combination of artistry and science. Because, if it's a damp day, it will affect how the machines work. If it's a dry day, it will affect how the rope is wound. Especially on a natural fiber rope like cotton. That sort of thing. Yeah.

MR: Is that what you mostly use?

BM: I use all cotton for the small work. This is cotton [showing rope]. And leather—of course, you can see it's all leathered. Now, this interestingly enough is synthetic, which is polyester. This is the first cord that comes out of the cannon on the Coast Guard. And this, here, it's purely, purely decorative. And that's what's so interesting.

MR: And you're using it for a key ring.

BM: It is interesting that you put the two together. Because it really is—you can make… You can do a job in ropework that's just a job. And then you can do a rope job that's… This doesn't have to be so fancy, it's just a key chain. But I made it fancy, to exhibit some. [28:05]

MR: Now, when you do work like that do you charge by the project or by the hour? Because you were saying you have about 180 hours in that piece.

BM: In this piece. I charge by the hour. This of course, is… This is—I would call this a vanity work. I would call this something I can wear on my chest very proudly and show off.

MR: This is the becket we're talking about.

BM: That's right, the becket. And this is like my—I'm putting it on my head because I want, or on my back because it really is a badge. This I could never charge for—I do tie the beckets, and I take them—and this is how I do it. Everything that I do is by the time. I know from my bookkeeping how much my overhead is. I know how much my gas is. I know how much my telephone is. I know how much—even my lunch, all those things are factored in to how much I charge per hour. So, when I sit down to decide, "Oh, he wants a custom fender for his little white hulled dinghy." Well, I never made one of those. But, I made one a little smaller, and I made one

a little bigger. So I go to my recipe book. I keep detailed instructions and notes on everything I do. OK, well now the four inch by six inch fender, that I charged thirty-nine dollars for. The one that's this big, about twice as big, is twice as much. OK, so this should be—that's how much I should charge. It's a recipe I have—I have my recipe book.

MR: Recipes, that's interesting.

BM: And, everything is timed, and everything is documented as to how much, like I said. I'm repeating myself now. How much my fuel is to keep the shop warm. How much my light bill is.

MR: So you're—

BM: How much my rent is.

MR: —a business woman, you're an artist, you're a tradition bearer as we would see it.

BM: Yeah. So the person that comes to me, he would learn that too. Or she would learn that too. To factor that in. I hope, that I'm not going to go in to competition against me. That's the one thing that I hope I don't—but I definitely want to teach.

MR: Yeah. Well, you have a lot of experience that people don't have yet.

BM: Yeah. That's right.

MR: What… I sort of want to wrap this up.

BM: Yeah, sure.

MR: What are you most interested in people taking away from this festival? Ideas about commercial fishing, or…?

BM: You know what I want people to come away from this festival… The fishing industry has had such a bad rap. Everyone that comes by my booth, after they learn a little bit about making rope, tying this little knot that I give them, I hope that they take away the fact that we're all really generous people. I don't *have* to give them anything. But I *want* to. I run out and I put a little rope bracelet around a little one, you know? And I explain to them it's all cotton, because I took into consideration that the baby might put it in their mouth. I says now, "Now, you know all these boats are open. It's so interesting to go in them and see how *clean* they keep everything!" Because, it's just—the boats on the outside look kind of scummy. But you go on the inside and they're really nice.

MR: Yeah. Yeah.

BM: If people take away just that one thing. "Wow! This boat's really…. This is where they… Oh this is where they s—! They keep it nice!" I always tell them they don't look exactly like that when they go to sea, but they can be very tidy. I said, "I've been on and off dozens and dozens of boats, and the men are very tidy. Very clean. Very tidy." I think—and I think what the—the

show that's on TV? I think that that will help. Because that show's rough, too.

MR: This is *The Dangerous Catch [The Deadliest Catch?]*.

BM: Yeah. Yeah. They show some scenes down below. And the people—they can't get the smell. You would think the boat would smell bad. It doesn't.

MR: No, it is clean.

BM: It is, very very clean.

MR: And because people are working so hard, …

BM: Mm hm.

MR: …in very limited space, they have to be organized.

BM: Yeah.

MR: They have to be clean. And that's a safety issue, too.

BM: That's right.

MR: You can't afford to slip on anything, or…

BM: That's right. That's right. But without them going on the boat, physically, they don't see that.

MR: Right.

BM: They don't experience the sights, the smell…I tell them, you know, "These captains are proud to show off their boats. They're like their babies."

MR: Absolutely.

BM: They *love* their boats. They *want* them to be safe. It goes against some of the things that you read and hear. That's the main thing.

MR: Well, that's—that's a wonderful way to...

BM: And I think that's what Laura wanted.

MR: And I think she's succeeding.

BM: I think she's accomplishing it one hundred percent.

MR: Absolutely. Well, thank you for being part of this oral history.

BM: Thank you.

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

Reviewed by Nicole Zador, 12/5/2025