

Name of person Interviewed: Barbara Merry [BM]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known)

Sex Female

Occupation Ropework

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same) MB

Residence (Town where lives) Snug Harbor, Rhode Island (part of

Wakefield)

Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Millie Rahn [MR]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbor Development Commission

Date and time of interview: Sept. 23, 2007

INDEX / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: Women; Ropework; Knotting; Splicing; Spokane, Washington; Southern California; Newport Beach; Cruising boat; Boat cook; Galley; Macramé; Ashley's *Book of Knots*; Rhode Island; Snug Harbor; Wakefield; Marlinspike; Marion, Massachusetts; Tug boat fenders; Chest becketts; Splicing tools; Ditty bag; Rope railings; Come alongs; Catenary; Rope materials;

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[00:00] Born Spokane, Washington; Raised Southern California, Newport Beach; Father owned a wholesale/retail marine company, been around boats whole life though different from New Bedford boats; Raised on a wood cruising boat; Father taught her how to cook on a boat; Love ropework; Got started from macramé/needling pin money, switched eventually to ropework after macramé died; Used Ashley's *Book of Knots*; Started working on own after divorce to be home with daughter after school;

[03:05] Came from California after second marriage, how ended up in Rhode Island ; Lives Snug Harbor, been there about twenty-five years; How she came to call herself the "Marlinspike Artist"; Web site is marlinspikeartist.com; Marlinspike is like a big steel needle used to splice wire;

[04:50] Showing a trick knot tied without letting go of ends; Tying another a man who ties knots showed her at her booth, doesn't know name—uses for key chains, luggage markers, zipper pulls; Winnie Lambrecht, Rhode Island state folklorist, working to find her an apprentice;

[07:32] Relationship between knots, boats, why watermen need know knots; Teaches rope work, splicing, wire splicing to Merchant Marines; Different types of splices, knots; Author of *The Splicing Handbook*; All fishermen on boat need know which knots used for specific things, how to tie/untie;

[12:18] Other women who do this—Splice Girls, New Bedford; Also is a marine purchasing agent, but wanted to work at home after divorce so daughter wouldn't need day care; Moved to Marion, Mass. when first came to east coast; Works in her studio, sells online, teaches; Customers all over the country; Does boat shows—did all until this year, cut back to stay closer to aging mother; Makes tug boat fender, chest becketts; Chest becketts as occupational display/badge of honor;

[18:12] Probably about a thousand different knows, doesn't have them all memorized but can tie most; Has seen significant improvements in attitudes towards women; Experience of learning splicing from Captain Wheeler, Providence Marine, and different men's attitudes toward her as a female, how she dealt with it; High regard for Donna Goodwin, Splice Girls, who grew up in a local fishing family and had connections to start her work; Starting out was tough for her;

[23:45] Most all her tools fit in a "ditty bag"; Uses a come along to make rope railings for piers if customer wants rope tight, not with a catenary/bend; Artistry aspect of work done for yards, etc; Factory rope making combination of art and science because weather conditions, etc., affect the rope; Uses all cotton for small work; Some have leather; Some polyester;

[28:05] Charges by the hour, based on past bookkeeping; Wants visitors to understand that fishing industry people are generous people, clean, hard working, safety-minded, proud of their boats and what they do; Laura has succeeded 100% in conveying this through the festival;

[End of File WAV_0010_001/End of Interview]