

## Interview with Carlos Rafael

**Narrator:** Carlos Rafael

**Interviewer:** Millie Rahn

**Location:** New Bedford, MA

**Date of Interview:** September 26, 2004

**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:** Claudia Kirk

### Abstract

On September 26, 2004, Millie Rahn interviewed Carlos Rafael as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project. Carlos talks about his childhood in the Azores, and the influences that led him to immigrate to America, where he settled in New Bedford in 1968. He chronicles his career, which started when he was 17 and lied about his age to start working as a doffer in a textile mill, and details his entrance into the fishing industry. After years of work, he built a company, Carlos Seafood, Inc. He says that he has no regrets about everything he has done so far, except for the negative image presented of him, and the fishing industry as a whole, by the media. When asked about the future of the fishery in New Bedford, Rafael believes that some survivors will make it through, but it will be very hard. He thinks that the future is for those with deep pockets who can diversify.

Millie Rahn: Okay, could you give me, for the tape, your full name, a little bit about where you were born, how you got into the fishery, what you do now, and then we'll start having a conversation.

Carlos Rafael: My name is Carlos Rafael. I was born on the island in the Azores, Corvo – C-O-R-V-O. I immigrated to the United States in 1968, and I currently live in North Dartmouth.

MR: A ha, and do you come from a fishing family in the Azores?

CR: No, a farmer.

MR: A farmer, okay.

CR: When I was 12, I went to a monastery and that was located in the Island of Torceda, and that's where American base used to be, and we used to be invited to go there for Christmas and they would invite us to the base, and I would start seeing the American life on the base and all that and that's where my dream started to develop that I wanted out of there. And also because of the way the government was run no freedom of speech, no freedom of press and at that—at 12, 13 and 14 years old you start seeing these things and that's not a place to be if you cannot express your feelings alright. My father was a very well off farmer, my sister, she was employed by the post office. We are about fifteen years apart. She was all set in life then my father says, "I am already 57 years old, and I do not need to go and start a new life in America. I want to stay here," but I wanted to go, it would be my mother because he was too rough (tough) I could get my mother to get through him and convince him to immigrate because he was an American citizen but he had tried back in—when he was about 38 years old but when they had the earthquake in California, my grandfather's papers got shuffled there, it took them like 10 to 15 years for them to find the paperwork when my grandfather was here. Then we had a letter from the American Embassy that I didn't get to see the letter but my sister told me that we got a letter from the Embassy saying that we could immigrate to the States if you wanted to they found my grandfather's paperwork. Once my sister told me that because they won't tell me because I would have rebelled and because I wanted to immigrate in the worst way, my sister tipped me off my father got a letter from the council and I wrote home and I told them that I wanted to immigrate that I didn't want to stay in the monastery and one of the reasons I went to the monastery was to escape the war we had in Africa, Angola and Mozambique.

MR: Right, right.

CR: That was the reason I went to the monastery cause being in the monastery to get an education through there I won't get draft and my parents since I was the only one left home and my sister she had a job she didn't live there, they figured out the easiest way out of the draft, it would be to go into the monastery. He wouldn't agree to come to America then I did something I wasn't supposed to do so I ran away from the monastery and I got thrown out because I couldn't quit because I knew he would kill me, I said, hey

I'll try to escape but I had already had messed up twice and by running away that was the end of the road. I came in you know you are not supposed to be out on the grounds after 6:00 at night unless you were companied with one of the monks. I took off, I went and see my sister and I delivered [inaudible] so I could get something. Get the priest pissed off at me and did they. They pick up the phone, I was scared to get back home; when I get back home he'll kill me. I got back home, they put me on a ship no planes back then we didn't have planes between the islands I had to go back home on a ship. I went back home. The day I arrived I had my suit, my tie, sharp shoes, he says, "Go home, take your shoes off, take your suit off and we had some people that work for us you go and pick potatoes." That's my freebie they give me then when I get home and then I would go home every day and start on my mother: you gotta convince him to go to America I don't want to stay here. But then I already know that he was thinking twice that I was gonna get drafted if he didn't get me out of there. After they cool off, our tempers are just about the same, he'll go and then we'll just forget that anything happened but I know he would cool off, and then he decided to go to St. Michael's to the Embassy and do all the processing and so forth. And finally I got him to convinced to get me to America. I arrived here I was only 15 years old. And I loved it! It was the best move he ever made. Even so after that he says, "We did the right thing," at a later time because he would be the type of guy who would not admit it right up front but over the years as his age was catching up because when he passed away he was 82, he would admit it was the right move he ever made was getting me over here.

MR: He did come?

CR: He did come,

MR: Oh, he did come, oh, ok.

MR: My mother came and my sister came after that because my sister couldn't come with us because she was over age

MR: Oh.

CR: We would have to get here and do a process. So she could come because y'know anyone over 21 years old, you got to do the process but she was still his daughter, she could come but it had to be a year later that's how long it took for the paperwork to go through immigration and after that she got her visa so she could come to America.

MR: Where did you come to?

CR: New Bedford

MR: You came straight to New Bedford?

CR: Straight to New Bedford. Because my father had a goddaughter over here, a godchild, and when we came we went to her house for about two weeks to get our foot on

the ground, so we could get an apartment and so forth. After two weeks we got over here, we already got our own apartment, then we stood in that apartment for a few years, four years or so five years, and then my father decided to buy a house and we had to fix it all up. Okay, it was run down, the old lady had too many cats and dogs I mean the whole place had to be taken apart, because the house smelled cat and dogs on the floors had to go, walls had to go, everything had to go, and he bought the house and y'know, all the years he always said as my life started to go well in the fish business or places I would like to see if your sister would keep the house because you do not need the house because your life is pretty good. I told him, "That's fine as kin with me, give her the house, I do not need the house she can keep the house," y'know my sister she is divorced and she never remarried she's been by herself for the last 15 or 20, 15 years at least and we always got along very well, so I told him that's fine she can keep the house I do not even want her to pay me for that she can keep it because I do well for myself I don't need, even my kids I mean they'll be alright and they don't have to say we could have gotten half of that, I will not allow that to come into play.

MR: Yeah.

CR: That's where we are.

MR: So you were 15 when you came here.

CR: Went to school for one week.

MR: One week? Then what did you do?

CR: I went to work, I went to school, I mean I came here with 2 years of college and I go over there to school and they're telling me dog, cat, fork, knife, I said whoa, whoa, if I want an AA I already had 2 years of college what am I going to do kindergarten and start all over again, I did not come to America for that I want to make money.

MR: Yeah.

CR: That was it and then whatever English I picked up was on the street, I wanted to go out with girls, I mean most of the kids my age a lot of them had came here 2 to 3 years prior to me so they could speak and get dates and so forth. I was having a rougher time because I could not speak the language, I says to myself I need to get myself in gear over here because I want to go out on dates and so forth and I started picking it up on the streets that's where I got it and at where I worked.

MR: There was also a Portuguese speaking community here, wasn't there?

CR: Yes, ya.

MR: Which makes it harder then?

CR: Oh, very.

MR: Because they did not speak English

CR: But, most of the dates was with American girls (chuckles, laughs)

MR: That's why you learned English

CR: Laughs, yeah I've got to learn.

MR: Right, right. Yup

MR: So what were some of your first jobs?

CR: First job I got in New Bedford, I worked for Amaral Linguica, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, worked there four days. When I got there the lady told me then I went to work we started at 7, I think it was around 8:15 I went to men's room to go for a cigarette and the lady she told me "Un, Un you ain't going for a cigarette like this. You go for cigarette on your coffee break at night at 9:30." I go "Are you serious?" Cause I start smoking at a very young age and I told her, "Ya not, you must be joking," cause I was doing the job—I mean I started and I picked up the job like, like nothing you know you have people there that they were older timers and I was the youngest at 16 there making linguicas. I mean I could make a mile of linguica in no time (laughs), I mean all you had to do was hit the machine and I could take care of all that, she says, "Oh no." I tried it, I says, I gotta hang up the rest of the week, it got to the fourth day I told the lady, "Look, the American dream that I wanted wasn't this, to come and make linguica and I cannot even go for a cigarette after an hour's work, an hour and 15 minutes for 5 minutes." I told her you keep your linguica and I'm leaving, cause to start off with we did not come to America with money being loaned, we had our own money to come. I mean he was a wealthy farmer I mean when we came here, if we didn't work for a year we could of lived.

MR: Yes.

CR: It's not most of the immigrants came they had no money, they had to borrow from some people to be able to come across that wasn't our case. That's why I said I do not need this, I mean I can always go back to Portugal if this is not gonna work out, I can always buy a ticket and go back where I started from.

MR: Right.

CR: Then I went to Berkshire Hathaway, look for job for my mother. When I went there, it was a guy that went to college with my sister. He was the general manager, Louie Motta, and that's how my sister—she was already here at the time, this is like a year gone by or eight months my mother, she had not gone to work. She was working for a lady in South Dartmouth; they cleaned the houses for the rich people in Padanaram

MR: Oh yeah.

CR: Mrs. Perry, she live in South Dartmouth, but then I will tell you about the story about this...how small the world goes, it's a small world and after that my mother says, "You know after this I would like to get a job just to get the 40 hours a week," and I says, "Okay I'll go with you for job at Berkshire Hathaway." I go there and all the jobs there was all full at the time, for woman there was no job. The lady at the window says "But if you want a job, we got openings for men for weavers and doffers." That's because that job would have been too hard for my mother. I was trying to get her a job, different job but the jobs that were open up there were rough jobs. See, for me I said, "How old do I have to be to work here?" The lady says "18," I says, "I'm only 16. I walked out, I says "Why did I tell her I was 16?" I says, "I screwed up." I brought my mother home. We live on Rockland Street, I walked all the way back down to Water Street, I went back there and I waited for lunch time for the lady that I spoke to go for lunch. [Laughs]

I was sneaky. I could see the lady go with her friends out to lunch, and I go inside. I go to the window, there was another woman there and I says "I'm looking for a job." She says, "How old are you?" I says "18." She says, "You can fill this paper here, at 2:00 you come here for a physical." Now at 2:00, I go for the physical, I pass the physical and they says, "When do you want to start?" and I says, "Now." They says, "Now?" "No, you can start at 10:00 tonight if you want to work the third shift." I says "Yes," because I was young I wanted to be out in the day, going the beach, going on my dates and so forth. [laughter]. But I says, "10:00 at night to 6:00 in the morning is a great shift." I start working that night, 10:00 at night to 6:00 in the morning. I was there for a year and a half. Of all the jobs that company has, I've done them all. As a doffer, as a weaver, as a change-over, I became a mechanic; I did everything inside of that place because I wanted to learn all the trades so if I ever left there and I go for a job on one of those mills me would know all the trades. I am two, three months doing a job I get good at it, they would open a class, I would go to the classes for the next promotion, for the next skill job they had there. They would pay, it was not much but I mean you could get an extra 15 cents an hour, 20 cents an hour any job that you could climb up the ladder.

That means I did three jobs in one year. I got a 60 cent raise because I was going 20 cents higher every time that I promoted to one of those jobs. My sister's husband became an electrician at the company he was an electrician in the Air Force over there, overseas and when he came here, he went to Berkshire Hathaway as an electrician. My sister, in the meantime, her friend is the general manager of Berkshire Hathaway. One day they happened to meet, my sister didn't know that Louie was the general manager – one time she goes and brings the husband to work there and Louie Motta walks out of the office, he's going out for lunch or whatever, he sees my sister they start talking. So when I was born Louie and my sister were in college together and conversation comes about and Louie tells my sister, "By the way what about your brother he should be 16 or 17, 17 & 1/2 now, about 17." He says, "Because this is how many years ago we went to College." She says, "My brother, my brother works here; he's been working here for a year and a half." He says, "What do you mean your brother works here? Your brother can't work here." She says, "My brother works here. He has been working here for about a year and

a half.” He says, “He can’t work here. You have to be 18 because of insurance.” I go in at 10:00 at night, there was a note on the room I use to work that they wanted to see me in the office the following morning. I go in the office he looks at me, he says, “I want to ask you a question, tell me the truth, how old are you?” I told him “19,” [Laughter]. I figure it’s already a year [laughter]. He says, “19 my foot, you’re not 19.” I says, “What do you mean I am not 19, who are you to tell me that I am not 19.” He says, “Because the day you were born, I was in college with your sister.” I said, “Oh shit, now I am in trouble.” [Laughter] I said “Okay, then you caught me. I’m 17 and two or three months. I says that’s how old I am.” But he goes and he goes and gets my record, I mean I have beaten all the odds, I mean all the jobs I have, I always did better than the next guy there because I wanted to show that I could do it so if you put an application to go for another job if you go for another job if you do not have a good record on this job their gonna say we’re not going to let this bum up the ladder. “Take a look at my record.” He says, “Look, we would like to keep you here, we can’t. The day you turn 18, you got my word we’ll call you back.” I said, “Okay.” I was pissed. I was aggravated, I said “I had bought a brand new Roadrunner at the time, I had my payments every month for brand new car I said, “This is crazy now, this is going to hurt – meantime my mother she’s working in a fish houses already, my father got a job in a fish house, my mother got a job in a fish house but I was looking at their paychecks; I was making 90 hours a week, I would bring home \$147. After tax, 90, I mean that means you’re working two shifts.

MR: Yeah.

CR: I was doing 16 hours a day, I mean one time I got home my mother had to wake me up, I had fallen asleep in a block tower, I almost drowned in there because it was too many hours. I saw their paychecks and I said I’m gonna go work in a fish house, this is what I’m gonna try. Use to be right up here, right at the end of the street, Eldridge, use to be two small piers over here, used to be owned by Eldridge Seafoods. I came here for a job and the foreman (CR’s cell phone rings) he was a black man and as cell phone continues to ring he says, “I have to get this –I’m waiting for a call, I’m waiting for a call, very important, that’s the only thing - one of my boats, I’m the only cold ferry in port that’s the only thing – one of my boats, it’s like begging ‘em even so I’m gonna shut it off, maybe he can leave a message here and I will try to call him back because - Where were we now?

MR: Okay, Eldridge Seafood

CR: Eldridge Seafood, and the foreman over there, he was a Black man named Arthur Correia and he says, “You I will get you a job here, you come in tomorrow morning,” the auction used to be here, “if after the auction we got boats over here we will give you work.” I said, “Okay. Next day I went, 17 years old, the boxes were huge, I mean they were supposed to be 125 pounds, they were always beating the fishermen for a few extra fish in the box, I mean the boxes be like 140 pounds, at 17 years old lifting boxes all day, I mean it was brutal. I said, “Oh boy, this is not gonna be the job I was looking for but I’m gonna hang onto it until I can find something better.” Meantime when we used to finish here, I went down to Aiello Brothers, on Homers Wharf, and ask them if they wanted somebody to

teach how to cut fish, as an apprentice cutter. He said “You, if you want you can start on Monday.” I think this was like Wednesday or Thursday, I said “If you want me to start on Monday that is alright but I could start tomorrow.” He said, “No, Monday, you ain’t starting tomorrow.” Monday I went over there and was another man over there a Cape Verdean man, his name was Eddie Fortes; he was the guy that taught me how to grab the knife, and to try to sharpen the knife and all the moves you have to do so to make it simple. If you have a sharp knife it’s a lot easier to cut the fish than if you have a dull knife, and I mean all the tricks of the trade that goes along with it. Four months later I was good at it. I was pretty good at it.

Six, seven months later I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> best cutter that they had in there. I went to the owner and I told him you gotta give me a raise. He said “Oh no, no, no we lost a lot of money on percentages for all the time you were learning and so forth.” I said, “Look if you do not give me a raise I’m gonna quit, I’ll go to someplace else, now I know how to cut I don’t need you.” He says “No.” He didn’t think I would quit. Monday came, I quit, without a job because now I knew the trade and there’s a lot fish I can find a job. Went and ask for job on Sea Fresh, they were located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, across the street from Archie’s Garage. He used to be a paper company. I think he used to be JB Paper, right on the corner over there. They give me a job, we were working 10, 12 hours a day, the pay was pretty good, I think the pay back then for the cutters - they were paying me \$2.20 at Aiello’s and I started with \$3.40 - \$3.60 for Sea Fresh. Things were going good but me and the Foreman over there, we didn’t meet eye to eye. Things were going good because I would do, because we had limits what you could cut because we had a union member you were supposed to cut 16 boxes of fish a day, 2,000 lbs. for 8 hours, for 8 hours pay if you wanted to get union wages. By 1:00 in the afternoon, 1:30, quarter of 2, I would have my 8 hours in. My 2,000 lbs would be cut then I would go upstairs for a cigarette, goof off and I would still end up cutting an extra 300, 400, 500 pounds by the end of the day more than the union asked for, but he won’t like that. He would go to me and he would fire me and tell me something and I would tell him, buzz off, I don’t even want to hear it. I was a little rebellious back then too [laughter] and I would tell him, “Look, if you don’t like it, fire me. I don’t care. I can get a job anyplace.” But if I didn’t do my work I could see him getting on my case but I was doing more than I’m supposed to do. He fire me, I call the union, they give me the job back. He says, “What you fire him for?” He says, “Because he went to the men’s room.” “How many boxes he had cut?” “Oh I suppose to have 16” – “He had 19.” “So why did you fire him?” “How can you fire him if at 2:00? He had 19, if he’s supposed to do until 4 o’clock 16?” and that was the controversy every time. And Joe Veg was the union president, I go back to work. I don’t like unions today but back then I was a real union rebel. [laughter]. Finally one day he fired me too many times that day and I said, I had enough of this; I said I don’t need this. I quit and went to work for Pilgrim Fish. Then from Pilgrim Fish, I went to work—No, I had worked for Paresi, I worked for Paresi first under the Fairhaven Bridge before I went to work for Sea Fresh. I quit, that’s right, I quit Aiello’s and went to work for Paresi. Then one time it was the same situation, my father had worked at Paresi and my mother but the owner and my father were very good friends and were at the same age, Slim, from the old school and I was a little rebel. One day Slim was sitting on the top of the box and was watching us cut and I didn’t like anybody to be watching me cut because—I put the knife down the glove down and I went to the bathroom. I must have



took 15 minutes but my day was done. I mean I had maybe 30 boxes out of 16 but they was large yellow, I had maybe 30 boxes cut at 2:00 in the afternoon, now I'm going to milk it the rest of the day because my day is more than enough. When I come down the stairs Slim gets on my case and I told him off. My father grabs a freakin' board and he beats the living s--t out of me in front of everybody, I tell him, "I quit." "You not going to quit," I said, "I quit." Don't even you could kill me with this board here, I mean for being rebel at that age what my father did at that age was the right thing but I'll do it to my kids today if that acted that way. I should have never sworn at Slim, he was 62 years old, and I did, I said "FU." I should have never done that and when my father heard that he could not speak hardly no English but a bad word you would know.

MR: Yes.

CR: He went and got the board and right across my back. I grabbed my tools, I didn't say nothing, I didn't rebel to him. He says, "You not quitting." I says, "I quit and don't make a bigger scene than this because you'll have to kill me to make it any different, I am leaving." I wash my gloves, my knife, my apron, I rolled everything and I walked out. I said, "He'll kill me when I get home but I don't care." I says, "I am not going to put up with this working with him; it's not going to work." That's when I went to Sea Fresh. When Sea Fresh gets bought up by Pilgrim Fish, we go into the new Pilgrim Fish right in the waterfront, right in docks. Then the fish industry went into a crisis, smaller landings and we not getting 40-50 hours a week. I decided to go to Boston and work for a company by the name of North Atlantic Fish. Back, this is 1974; they made me an offer that I could not refuse. They told me that if I cut groundfish one advantage that I had over a lot of people is that I could cut flatfish, I could cut groundfish, I could cut redbfish, I could cut anything you put it in front of me—I cut. Cause I had learned at Tichon Seafood when they were doing military contracts I use to work from 7 in the morning til 5:00 in the afternoon at Sea Fresh, I would go home and have dinner start at 6:00 at night and work til 2:00 in the morning at Tichon working on redbfish, ocean perch for military contracts and that went on but I was learning all the species. That's why they give me the job in Boston because they knew I knew how to cut all the species. I worked there for four years, did well. They paid me a premium to travel back and forth. We were making \$3.40 an hour. Here, they would pay me \$4.50 an hour to go to Boston. They were paying me \$4.50 an hour, they gave me 12 sick leaves a year, they gave me health insurance, they gave me 2 weeks vacation and they were giving me \$50. a week for gasoline for travel. You couldn't complain, over there no such thing as 16 boxes a day. Over there you cut your heart out because they had a union but they wouldn't put you no limit, over there it was a days work for a days pay. What you used to get as days pay is work for days pay. In four years I never took a day off from that company, I collect all my sick leaves at the end of the year, I never took a week vacation and at the end of year I would collect my vacation. The Blizzard of '78 I went to work. I left here at 4:00 in the morning and I did get to work at 7:00 but I did get to work. At the end I said this is too tiring. I got to find something else to do. I was already married with a daughter, with a new house to pay for at that age, I mean, I had to do some work to be able to swing all that. Pilgrim Fish, in New Bedford, the general manager gets a hold of me because some of my friends use to work there and they says, "How do we get a hold of him?" They call

my house and they says—this is the same company that foreman used to fire me ten times a day he was working with them—they says, “Do you want to come and work for Pilgrim Fish as a foreman and run the fillet operation for us?” I tell them “Youse guys must be insane. I use to get fired 5 times a day, now you want to give me the job in charge of the operation? What are youse guys messed up?” They says, “We think you can do it.” I tell them, “What happens to Albert?” That was the guy who used to fire me all the time. “If you take the job on,” I says, “First, will you sign a contract for one year no matter what as long as I don’t steal, if I do everything else, he cannot fire me because I don’t trust him?” They says, “We’ll sign a contract.” When I get there for them to sign the contract he tells the general manager to sign it. I said, “No, no, no.” “You sign. You own the company.” “You sign the contract.” “What, you don’t trust me?” I says, “It’s not a matter of trust, you sign the contrast otherwise I won’t quit my job because they’re good to me.” They give me the job and they shit can the other foreman, I laughed that was the best thing in the world, that’s what I was waiting for over the years, I says, “Now, I’m gonna see who fires who.” I was there for a year they says already end of ’79, half of ’79, then that guy who use to fire me finally convinces me to go do the night riding with them at the docks because they knew I had saved up some money to go buy the lobsters, and the monk fish and the scallops from the boats at night which they used to call the “shack” which I got me into trouble for at a later time in my life because of all that cash we pay the boats and so forth. I had at the time \$100,000 saved.

MR: Wow!

CR: I put all my money on that bum. I was working like a dog to bring his company back that was my biggest mistake. Then at the end of ’80 I was out my \$100,000 and I was into about \$105,000 into Luzo bank. I went to the bank and I told Mr. Friars, “I know how much I owe you. You have a lien on my house, don’t foreclose. Give me 6 months because I’m gonna try it on my own.” In the meantime, I already had three trucks that were mine outright and I already in my name, they couldn’t screw that up. I says, “Give me 6 months, I’ll pay you off. One way or another if I don’t deliver in 6 months, you can foreclose but give me 6 months because I have so many problems that I gotta think how am I going to work this out.” He knew my father well and they knew I would deliver one way or another they knew I would deliver. I started on my own in 1980, I think it’s the 80s, mid-March. I think it was March or May of 1980 under Carlos Seafood. I had my trucks, I went to a friend, borrowed \$5,000 from him. My father had money; my sister had money. I wouldn’t go to them because they had no business minds. They figured he lost everything that’s his now and my sister, she would start humming now he’s going to lose whatever we got left. I went to a friend, he loaned me \$5,000. I was left with 27 cents in my pocket out of the hundred thousand plus the debt of \$105,000 to Luzo Bank. With that \$5,000 six months later I had \$252,000 in cash in my hands.

MR: Wow!

CR: But I was working around the clock the boats would sell me the monks, because there was days I was on 3 days straight before I would even stop. I needed toothpicks to keep my eyes open. I went into the bank. Mr. Friars says, “Where did you get this

money?" I says, "Not drugs, I didn't steal it from anybody." Maybe I hustled a lot of fishermen down there, y'know, wheelin' and dealin' but shame on them if they didn't know better. But it was all through business transactions, y'know. I use to buy a ride buy low and sell high, that's the name of the game in buying and selling. I pay them off and on that year I start building my house, I sold the one I had. I build a brand new house at the time was a lot of money. \$150,000 back then was big bucks and I build a ten room home. I bought 2 fishing boats that same year, then we going into '81 and '82 already. Now in 1984, I get indicted for tax evasion. Because I never deliberate try to beat the IRS, it's just that I thought I'm gonna make all this money, someday I gotta pay but I thought I could pay later. I didn't know anything about accounting, the intention was never beating them. But using the government's money as long as I could to build my company and I knew that wasn't going to slap me around because that was never on my mind if the intent was to put the screws to the IRS it was the last thing on my mind. But they would never believe that. They says, this guy is a little weasel, he's trying, y'know, to beat the system up and that wasn't so. I got indicted but before even I get indicted, no, it was after the indictment and I didn't smarten up. I had \$252 or \$256,000 deposited at Luzo Bank. One morning, I go to get some money to pay the boats, I tell the girl, "I need to take out \$15,000." She says, "What you mean \$15,000? \$15,000 from where?" "From my account." She says "No, the IRS took it all yesterday." They took all my money.

Now I am back in trouble again, I says, "Oh boy am I in deep shit." Then they drop—when the indictment came, I go and get the attorney and we start fighting the case. They say it's, "tax evasion." What do you mean tax evasion? It's not tax evasion. I never did it with intent, it's not tax evasion. I mean, the intent of beating the system, it wasn't there. But I could dance up and down, they would never believe that. I get convicted of tax evasion they send me to a federal prison for 6 months. The US attorney wanted to give me 20 years. I said, "Twenty years, what am I going to go 20 years, why am I going to go 20 years? I used to tell my lawyers, "This guy who is holding those papers says 20 years, I didn't kill anybody. Why they gonna give me 20 years? They kill people they don't give 20 years to jail." He says, "Don't believe that, they doing that to scare you off." They wanted me to give them the name of the people I have given the cash to. If I give them the names of the people I give the cash to, I will not get jail sentence, I would have to just pay the tax. I tell them I don't remember and I don't know and I don't remember and I don't know and I stuck to my guns. I don't remember and I don't know. They told the judge they wanted 20 year sentence and the judge says "Look youse guys must be off the wall there, 20 years. He ain't getting 20 years, he's getting 6 months in the Federal Penitentiary. That's it, case closed." Even so, 6 months I was going nuts. 6 months, my kids are all in school. They were small, this is going to be crazy, but, I did my time. I end up serving 4 months and 14 days; I was able to keep Carlos Seafood afloat. I get out of prison and things start even going much better for me than before, cause I was looking at the TV. The other night and I saw Martha Stewart and I says it's the same thing. I guess people sympathize with you when you do bull shit. [Laughs] They sympathize about your misery if you do well in life and somebody just throws a monkey wrench in your life to screw you up and that wasn't my case. I did something wrong but it was never intended. They should have made me pay the taxes but don't send me to prison because I didn't deliberately try to beat the system. But that wasn't the case, I ended up paying. We

made a deal when I came from prison, they knock on my door again, I thought it was over, they took the \$200 something thousand dollars. I said its all over, forget about it but it was no way near over. They come to settle with me he says, now they knock on my door. I says, "You guys again, I didn't do anything wrong, what the hell do you want here?" 'Cause I remember the guy, "What do you want from my house?" "Our taxes, we still gotta talk, how you going to pay us?" "Pay you, pay you what? You took \$252 or \$256,000. Pay you what?" Says, "Here's the bill, \$752,000." 752, the numbers were staring there and the stupid 52's, the way use, I should have played those numbers, "You owed us \$752 - we took \$252-256,000. out of your account, leaves you with \$500,000 something dollar bill at 20% with penalties. We want to know how you going to pay us." How I gonna pay you, I don't have a clue. But I says. "I got to give it to my accountant and my lawyer." I says, "Give me all that and I'll get back to you, or my lawyer will get back to you or my accountant will get back to you, somebody will call you back." I go to the accountant, Rosenfield and Holland, those the ones I get in touch with then, they made the deal, 5 years at \$7,000 a month I had to pay. That had to be after taxes [chuckles]. I could do no more games. That means I start to draw crazy pays out of my company to be able to pay the IRS, and to pay for my house and to pay for car and my pay for my kids' education. It was suicidal, but business was going very well. I mean I was smoking, I said "Even so at least I got it to pay. I paid them off. As I was paying them off, I was still making extra money and I was buying another boat and buying another boat and then they had another auction in Fairhaven when, really the scallops were in crisis. Now we're up to '95, I go to the auction; I already had saved \$650,000 or \$675,000 I had put away. I go into an auction I end up buying 3 scallopers—sometimes, you know maybe this is more luck than brains—I buy the three scallopers for \$615,000. This is in November of 1995. When they send the boats out in January or February of 1996 the scallopers came in full force and I started making money from all angles. I mean things were starting to go even better than they had gone. Then everybody says, "Ah, you were so lucky." But I mean then you had all the big wallets in Fairhaven when they auctioned the boats off but nobody had the nerve to step to the plate because those boats had cost, a year prior to that, they had paid a million dollars to build 'em and they were selling them at \$300 and a hundred some thousand a piece. I says, "I got to be crazy not to invest; just the dam boat alone is worth that kind of money." Those are the boats they have saved me up to today; my scallopers have done very well financially. They have been able to finance all my other games, all the draggers I bought and all my other gigs I've done in this business, between my warehouses, and the my new plans, I plan to build new warehouse, I got a new fish plant down there and this has all been because of all the cash we been able to get from of all these scallopers on my \$615,000 investment.

MR: Wow!

CR: Today, we own, I think, 17 boats, a fish house, and a big warehouse brand new that I build in the north end of New Bedford. I got no regrets for everything I've done up to today. [Long pause...]

MR: That's quite a [inaudible] story

CR: But, the Standard Times only writes the bad shit of the things that I get caught

monkeying around with a little bit. They try to make me sound like I'm a gangster. Anytime they put shit in the paper was like I was a gangster, and that's not what I am.

MR: Well, and Richard Vrey was saying, too, that anything to do with the fishery, they're always dumping on the fishery and fishermen but not anyone else in town.

CR: That is correct

MR: 'Cause I use to live in Newfoundland and know about fishermen, you know.

CR: I think in 1995, no, was it '95 no '96 I think it was '96 or 1997, I get indicted for price fixing and the reason being I was getting to be the major player in this port, or the second major player and I was looking for the title to get into first place to be the biggest and they ratted me out to the justice department that I use to price fix with the other dealers. We all get indicted. It cost me 2 and a half million dollars to get out of that mess and that's something I didn't do. We went in front of a jury there; they deliberated 20 minutes they came out with a verdict. They knew it was bullshit. They acquitted all of us because the government had nothing on us, nothing in concrete and that cost me two and a half million dollars in cash out of my pocket. I mean that put a hurt on my pocket. That's why it weakened my company right out, I mean you take two and a half million dollars out of a company that was over, then the banks start running, they wanted their line of credit back and that, they weakened Carlos Seafood right off almost to its knees and now I've been just trying to put everything back since '97 I been working my heart out to put everything back to the swing like things used to be but I don't think I'll ever do it. [Deep breath] Not in this life I'm 52, I don't have enough strength to fight like I use to fight before. [Deep breath]

MR: So what do you think is the future of the fishery in New Bedford?

CR: Good. Four, five years from now if not 100 % of them fall by the side, we'll have some survivors and I'm gonna make sure I'm one of them. But it's going to be very hard; a lot of them are not going to make it. They have no survival chance, unless they're willing to put a lot of money into it but if they had a lot of money they wouldn't be in it to start off with. Some of these guys you know they go paycheck to paycheck. And now the paycheck takes a lot longer to make a paycheck with so little days to fish.

MR: Right.

CR: You could go a month with one paycheck and if that happens to be a bad one you got problems and unemployment you collect most of these guys have ran out of unemployment now, that makes it even harder. It's not, it's the future for guys with deep pockets, they able to maneuver and I'm not saying deep pockets like my case, but I can diversify, I got the draggers, I got the scallopers. The scallopers are at their peak and now everybody is making money, even with the crisis we been having and so forth even now we are going back to a hundred days at sea but we still with 120 days, we are still killin' them. We are making all kind of money and a lot of this money I've been putting back into the draggers to keep a balance hoping some day after the scallopers go down maybe the draggers will peak and

they will sustain the scallopers. I have alternatives but the guy that only got one boat he's in trouble.

MR: Yeah...

CR: He is in a lot of trouble. Big trouble. Especially if they got a house, mortgage, if they got a kid to go to college, you know what the college numbers are today, is it's humanly impossible

MR: Right.

CR: Trying to be a fisherman unless you got some government assistance and even so if they give you assistance, you still got to give a kid a car to travel to the college if its y'know 2 or 3 hundred mile radius, so a kid can go to college and home the weekends and so forth. It's very expensive.

MR: Are any of your children going to go and follow you into the fishery?

CR: [deep breath – long pause] I don't know. I would like not to see that. My oldest, she's married, she's well off. The husband, he's a hard worker, he does very well money-wise. They got 2 kids, they got their house, they got a couple new cars, they go many more vacations than I do. She's all set and I'm happy. She's good in life. My other one she's 26, she got a college degree in business, she works for the Sheriff's Department, I think she makes \$44/45 thousand a year. She lives home, she got no expenses or anything. She is happy what she does. My other one, she wants to be a shrink. She's in college now. She got to do 6 years there and whatever it takes to get to be a shrink. When she gets done in college then I got the youngest one, at 13 she's gonna start up again. I mean I'm in trouble here, I mean it costs a lot of money to get college education of these kids costs an arm and a leg and I got no assistance, I have to cough it up. I tell the wife, I'm like Al Bunyan I mean it costs a thousand a week just for education of these kids and that's a lot of money. I thought, I says a thousand for the education we gotta eat, we got our bills too, we got health insurance, we got all this crap we have to pay, I mean all these things got to come out of some place. But, I have no regrets, no complaints about I'm able to pay it and as long as I can get to the end of the month I mean everybody they know me on the waterfront I am happy with my pocket if I got 5 grand in my pocket or \$500 dollars, it doesn't change my lifestyle. Money never did change me. I laughed at it, it makes my life very comfortable. I want to pay telephone bill, like I tell everybody else down at the waterfront. The only difference thing between me and you is I can write a check, pay my gas bill, pay my telephone, pay my health insurance and I don't even think about it. That's the only difference these things do to me but this only come to me through hard work because when I was 16 years old and I was working 90 hours a week most of youse guys were having fun. They were partying, and you only started getting your act together when you were 23, 24, 25. Back then I already had a 7 year old daughter, I got a divorce I went and started from scratch again and I remarried at 25 and I went and went to do my life all over again. That means I didn't have, I mean the only time I had that was decent was when I was in college other than that at 15 I got here and my life started and most of the kids y'know I got 'em at

home, I see the way it is, its like I got to beg 'em to study. I got to make them a promise if you don't flunk at the end of the year like the oldest one I says, "If you go to college and you don't screw it up and you pass every year, you can have a car right out of a showroom you go pick up whatever you want. I don't care what number the car costs, you pick it." That means you have to give them incentives to study I mean, and I tell her this is for your own good, this is not for me. If you study, you get a good education so you don't have to depend on a man to feed you, so if you get married and he stinks, you tell him, "Look, pack your bags and screw." I just want to make sure that all of youse gonna have that position in life so at least you'll say, he did the right thing. He give me an education, I can hold myself all by myself, I don't need no man to carry me. That should be enough, don't tell me I promise I give you a car the day she graduated I think - y'know there nothing else said she got her diploma she said, "Dad, don't forget we going to the car room tomorrow to buy a new car." [Laughter] I mean, and that gets done and the other one she graduated and the other one she was going to college the senior year she said, "Make sure at the end I get a car too." I says, I mean youse guys must think this falls from the sky that's why I have to work 12/14 hours a day, even today. They think it comes from heaven.

MR: Yeah.

CR: Then at times when the mother she gets pissed at me, I mean and she starts screaming "too many hours." I says "Yeah, the new car in the showroom and the college payments and they all drive cars in this house, I mean it looks like a parking lot with all these cars outside, who pays for all this? Nobody else works here but me, you think it comes from heaven." That means and then they take sides with her, "She's right you could spend more time at home." I says, "No shit," and when Friday comes I would like to see who's going to pay for everything. But people are never happy in this world.

MR: No.

CR: No matter what, they never happy. We don't have enough, we got to aggravate. We got a little bit too much, they're pissed because you don't spend enough time with them, I mean it's... hey life it's miserable at times, but—

MR: But it's good at times too.

CR: It's good at times, yeah, it's good at times but it's like I had said before I got no regret. Everything I've done up to today, I would do all over again. [Tapping] If it was one thing, they say what about taxes, I would do the same thing all over again, you got to experience and you got an education and now when I have to pay taxes I file if I got to pay \$10 dollars I say make sure you pay them, they laugh, so that they don't have to go digging so as they find something wrong so they can come back and look.

MR: Right.

CR: Give them extra. It's almost better to get a check back in the mail then if [laugh] you are short a dollar they're gonna start looking and they might find something they're not

suppose to, not intentional but if something gets screwed up there. They're good to find things, no, no, no give them their fair shake. I don't want nothing with these guys no more. A hundred and nineteen thousand dollars tax liability turn out to be some \$750,000.

MR: Wow.

CR: One nineteen, \$760 or \$770 thousand back in the 80s you saw that the interest rate was at 20.

MR: Right.

CR: They charge me 20% on even at the end of the 7 years I was paying 20% on that. They give me \$100,000 penalty for each year, it was 3 years in a row the penalties was \$300,000 thousand and they didn't have to do that they knew \$119,000. I mean fine, I mean you charge me 20% and it was never intentional and so forth. You put me in jail and charge me the \$119 plus the 20% and I pay it. Now they had, it's like you do, well they want to penalize you I think. They love to knock you down. It looks like it's deliberate when they do things like that in the system. If you do well you not supposed to do well, I guess it's like it's against the law if you're successful. But nobody is successful in life unless they work very hard at it.

MR: Yeah.

CR: Because nothing comes from the sky. I haven't seen anybody on this waterfront do well just by sitting at the end of the pier staring at the sky seeing if the dollars fall from the sky, I never seen it happen, otherwise I'd be sitting there. [Tapping]

MR: Well,

CR: This is the life story you got and the Standard Times never wanted to write this up.

MR: This is the one that is going into the archives. So this is good. I really appreciate it - I'm going to...Is there anything else you wanted to say?

CR: No, I think that's it.

MR: Well, OK. I'll say thank you and I'm going to stop this.

-----End of Interview-----  
Reviewed by Nicole Zador, 12/08/2024