



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

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Name of Narrator: Miguel Osiris Sanchez Parada

Name of Interviewer: Betsy Montes

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Background Information:

- **Name of person interviewed:** Miguel Osiris Sanchez Parada
- **Age:** 62
- **Gender:** Male
- **Occupation:** Supervisor at Trawl-Scallop Gear and Marine Supply building commercial fishing nets and rigging
- **Ethnicity:** Cuban

Interviewer: Betsy Montes

Translator: Betsy Montes, edited by Ellen Huggins

Observer(s): Emma York

Transcriber: Betsy Montes

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Key Words: Fishing net, jump ship, blueprint, Nova Scotia, refugee, fishing school, Cuba, immigration, family, New Bedford, Canada, rigging, family, teaching, Reidar's, cooking

Abstract:

In this interview, Miguel Sanchez explores his experience in the fishing industry, beginning with his journey of jumping ship from a Cuban fishing boat into a Canadian boat while he was a young law student, to escape political dictatorship. He then speaks about living in Nova Scotia for years without his family before immigrating to America to work in the netting and rigging department of Reidar's Trawl-Scallop Gear and Marine Supply in New Bedford, MA. Miguel describes net making as an art that is progressively being lost amongst the new generation of fish industry workers, and he speaks about his passion for teaching his younger co-workers how to make nets. Additionally, Miguel reflects on his family in Cuba, his new community in New Bedford, and his love for cooking seafood.

Index

[00:00-5:00] Miguel introduces himself and consents to being interviewed for the project. He explains how he migrated to Canada after jumping ship in 1996. He then is scouted to work in New Bedford and is able to gain American citizenship through his Canadian paperwork. He begins his journey to New Bedford around late 2016 and early 2017, where he becomes a beloved figure at a Reidar's specializing in many different fishing industry disciplines.

[5:00-10:00] Miguel talks about his upbringing in Cuba. He explains he got his American residency card through his Canadian passport. He explains how his brother was a fisherman, and how he enrolled into a fishing school in Cuba. He began his work as a fishing net technician learning the tricks of the net making trade. He explains making around 60 cents a day in Cuba as a seaman during a 6 month internship. While studying law, he did not complete his studies due to "jumping ship" from Cuba to Nova Scotia. He entered Canada by spotting a small boat on April 15, 1996 and "jumping" aboard.

[10:00-15:00] Miguel talks about being accepted by the Canadian fisherman on the small boat who helped get him to immigration. He initially lived in a homeless shelter and studied English. He left his wife and children behind in Cuba for almost 5 years until he could see them after a petition for them to move abroad to Canada.

[15:00-20:00] Miguel talks about how in those 5 years the children he left behind grew older, due to a long separation from his family. While living in New Bedford he hasn't connected with Cuban migrants, has connected with migrants from other Latin American countries. Many of his co-workers are from Central America, he often acts as a cultural broker at his place of employment, interpreting on the job. Fishing is a family business because fishermen depend on good net makers and they often fish together.

[20:00-25:00] Reading fishing net blueprints is important because there are many different types of nets for scallops, shrimp and calamari. He explains the intricacies of net making such as the needles, knots and netting materials. He is proud of his work.

[25:00-30:00] His background in net making in Nova Scotia was using Russian blueprints but in the U.S. they use different metrics and numbers on the blueprints. Net making is becoming a lost art as many fishermen no longer have this skill. He advises adoring youth in the fishing industry to find mentors in the fishing industry.

[30:00-35:00] He is 62, and will retire soon. He mentions that not many young people are entering the netting industry. Most are older and/or close to retirement.

[30:00-35:00] Reading blueprints is an essential skill to net making. He details that working with wire requires focus and attention to detail in order to prevent injuries or accidents.

[35:00-40:00] Net sizes can vary. He dives into the definition of trawlers nets or fishing nets. The type of net used depends on the activity you will be conducting like fishing or scalloping. The size of the mesh will vary depending on the type of seafood.

[40:00-45:00] Miguel speaks to how the fishing industry is constantly changing, including the price of fish and the regulations put upon the industry. He also describes the careers of his adult children; his sons work abroad, but his daughter and his wife have both helped him on the job, after he taught them about his work.

[45:00-50:00] Fishing is often an industry where the whole family works together like at Reidar's. He mentions how kind hearted the Reidar family is, even visiting him in the hospital while sick. They celebrate holidays like Christmas together. His pay and even working conditions have improved since moving to New Bedford.

[50:00-55:00] Many of the Central American migrants do not arrive in New Bedford with fishing skills and he has trained many employees with net making, blueprint reading and rigging skills. He feels proud to teach younger people the business. He previously taught classes in Cuba in Flota Cubana de Pesca, FCP, a big boating company. He would like to be an instructor and teach others about the fishing industry in the future.

[55:00-1:00] He respects the Reidar family and Rae because of his knowledge. Net building is an art because of its design, and construction. Although he can design nets, he has moved to rigging. AutoCAD is a valuable tool used to design nets, and other things.

[1:00-1:05] He is a big fan of seafood and shares his pan fried haddock recipe. He recalls learning to cook back home in Cuba as mom would come home late from work and he had to feed his siblings. He talks about his family back home in Cuba.

[1:05-1:07] The exchange rate in Cuba right now is one dollar for four hundred Cuban pesos. He laments the situation back home, however he is happy with his new life in New Bedford, MA. He can be found spending his weekends at home enjoying his time with his family.

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Full Transcript

[00:00]

Betsy Montes: Alright, so we are going to start and today is Saturday, May 11th. We are at Reidar's [Trawl-Scallop Gear and Marine Supply] in New Bedford. My name is Betsy Montes and I will be interviewing Miguel Sanchez. This interview is a part of the New Bedford Heritage Fishing Center Casting a Wider Net Project. The audio recording and transcript from this interview will become a part of the Center's Archive and the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Voices Archive and may be used to develop future programs, publications and exhibits. Can you repeat your name and spell it out for me?

Miguel O. Sanchez: My name is Miguel Osiris Sanchez Parada and most of the time people call me Miguel Sanchez. That's a short way to say my name. Miguel is M -I -G -U -E -L and Sanchez is S - A - N - C - H - E - Z.

BM: Awesome, okay. You told me your name, do you have a nickname?

MS: No, in the fishing industry before they call me 'Oso,' that means Big Bear. But after, when I get out of the fishing industry, there's no going to a fishing boat anymore. They just call me Miguel, and just keep it with Miguel.

BM: Okay, what is your profession?

MS: Here, I'm a fishing net builder, but that's the main thing I do here. Build the fishing net, work in rigging, and I really can't tell you exactly what because I work in all—in any area of the fishing industry right now. Here in Reidar, I can work in building the fishing net or like right now, working [in] rigging. Because [they said] 'We don't have nobody to work in rigging,' I said, 'I can work in rigging,' so I work in rigging too.

BM: What brought you to New Bedford?

MS: Well, I'm from Cuba like everybody knows right now. I jumped a ship in Nova Scotia in 1996. It was a fishing boat, a Cuban fishing boat. In 1996 I jumped ship in Nova Scotia, and from there, I started working in different activities until I got what I like to do with the fishing net. I built the fishing net, and I worked for many different companies like IMP, Hercules, Rigging. Um, I forgot the name of the other company I worked with. David Tay was the owner, and from there I started working with Hercules, and working in rigging too, in Hercules. And then one of my managers there, he told me that he and ?, they were looking for somebody that knew about netting, and if I'm interested in coming here, I need citizenship. I said 'Okay, I'll go see what they have.' So in that time, I think 2016, 2017, I come here to the store and family and they told me what they have and they showed me the whole place, everything that they're doing and I really found interesting what I do with fishing net. I like it, and said, 'Well, we'll see.' So I went—I go back to Nova Scotia and told them, 'Yes, I'm going back with those guys there at Reidar.' And then I come here, we sign all the papers, we do everything, I start working with them. Since that time, I've been here almost seven years ago. I didn't move.

Emma York: Are you saying you traveled back to Nova Scotia with the Bendiksens?

MS: No, not really, because like I—I'm from Cuba, and here in the United States, we have a Cuban Act. They call it CAA [Cuban Adjustment Act]. So, Cuban and like, immigration ? got that for the Cuban people. And after you've been here one year, one day, you can apply for that to get a resident card. So I applied for that, to get to see the lawyers that work with that, but what happened? Like coming here through Canadian citizenship, not like a Cuban guy, you know? I got everything okay, but they don't want to work with me like a Cuban. And they work with me like a Canadian. And then they—the lawyer worked with me and did all the stuff, and I get my resident card.

[5:00]

BM: You mentioned Cuba, what was it like growing up in Cuba?

MS: Well, I grew up in a very nice family. My mom— everybody was really very, very good. My brother was a fishing man. All the stuff, I was—he take me when I was young, young guy, you follow? They took me to the fishing boat and showed me how the fishing boat that— I start looking at—and I really don't be interested yet in that time, because I was, what, 12, 14 year old? And then after that when I get 16, or 18 year, I was in Grade 9, 9th Grade, and then somebody came to school ask me if I want to join the fishing industry. Going to the school for that, for four years. I said, 'Oh, that's good.' So, I went to school and everything worked from there.

BM: They have fishing schools in Cuba?

MS: In Cuba, yeah. I was started as a technician in the fishing net, and all of everything about fishing nets. Then I went to university for three years. I didn't finish because I jumped a ship, so I missed two more years. But I went to university not for fishing, I went to university for law. Law, I was studying. I want to be a lawyer, but I didn't—I missed two years (laughs).

BM: So how did you get into net making and did you learn net making in Cuba?

MS: Well, yeah, we—like I said, I was in the school for fishing net building, and like that, I just started getting how the net work. What is it point A to point B, everything about netting, even to join—everything about netting, you go into school get that— even that, make a knot. We got a session to— they show you how to make a knot with a rope, whole session, it's different for four years of school. So, in there, you're learning a lot of stuff. When you go to a fishing boat— sorry— third year in the school, you go in the fishing boat for six months. Like a training for six months in the fishing boat. You don't get too much money, only 50 cents, dollar. That's the only money. Yeah, eight pesos and 50 cents. That's what they pay you—

BM: A day?

MS: — that day, yeah. And then you go with them, work with them for six months, do everything like a seaman. Like any other guy in the fishing boat, you got to do this thing and then everything is good, because you're learning. So, I [was] learning a lot at that time. I start looking— something about that, it was not really what I want, but it's what I studied and I don't want to change it. So from there, I keep going on the fishing boat until I graduated, and going fishing to work with them.

EY: Could you talk more about jumping ship and what that means, and what drove you to do that?

MS: Yeah, well, jumping ship what does it mean—I was in— Cuba has a very hard situation with the government, okay? The government in Cuba is very hard with—with people, they don't look at the people, they call it dictatorship. Because when you be in the power for more than four years, that's a dictator, you know? And they don't change. They get ? — this guy wanted the government, they appoint that guy. So, when I was fishing, I decided, 'Really, don't stay in Cuba no more.' Because everything started getting hard. When I go— last time, 1996—I get a fishing boat, I get to Nova Scotia, and I just decided to stay there, no come back no more. So another boat—I was in the fishing boat, another boat coming close to us to get, um, food, different things that the boat need. But when I see that boat coming, I run to the main ladder, I jump in that boat, and say, 'Bye Cuba!' It was hard, it was hard, because to do that require a lot of stuff, because, you know, you don't know what to expect for you in that country. I've never been in Canada, in that time.

[10:00]

And for me, I said, 'Well—' It was April 15, 1996. Cold, really cold. Even the water in the buckets, it's freezing cold. And I said, 'Well, (laughs) I never know what to expect, but I don't want to come back to Cuba.' That's why I get to jump ship.

BM: Did they receive you well on the ship?

MS: Well, in the Canadian—the Canadian boat was small, like a small boat, they received you, they don't say nothing to you. Because you jump in, and they are very nice with people when they're in there. And what they did, they take us to the side, and taking after that to immigration, immigration take all your information, they go—somebody go to the boat for your passport, they give up my passport, not only me, but three more guys. They give up the passport, and then— somebody told me—at that time my English, not like it is now, my English now is really better. Before it was (laughs)—but I study English myself at that time. So, I understand, but not very clear. So they bring somebody, interpret it to—for us and the guy told us, 'Everything gotta be in the same way you guys that you've always done it, and don't lie, don't—' You know? I don't need to. So, everything was like this until they all said, 'Sign the paper and stay there.' But where to? Because they got one place there that they call the Metro Turning Point. The Metro Turning Point is where the homeless stay at night, in the— sometimes, you know, homeless people, they don't shower, they don't smell really nice, and you got bug in bed where you try to sleep, and the area is a small area, not a small area. You know, everybody is together in the same area, and the smell is awful, and I prefer to stay outside, sitting there in the rocking chair for a little bit. Until the morning, that you gotta get out there for seven o'clock, and don't come back any more to there until ten o'clock at night, so. I was there for a month (laughs) and some people decide to go back to Cuba—we got three guys, and one guy decide back to Cuba. I said, 'No, if I jump ship, I stay here. I don't know what happen, but I stay.' Until everything changes a little by little, and I go to the school—they take us to the English school in Canada, because in Canada— in Nova Scotia, nobody speaks Spanish. Everybody English, so I went to English school until I go to the first classroom, second, third one. Then I get to the third one, I get the fourth, the teacher called

me one day and said, 'Miguel you're ready to go to work.' (Laughs). So, they give me the paper and no more school.

BM: Did you meet your wife here, in Canada, in New Bedford?

MS: Cuba.

BM: Cuba? Okay.

MS: Yeah, my wife is from Cuba, and I got away—Cuba, like we call it Spanish, Cuba— for four years, even. Yeah, I do all the paperwork to bring my wife and my kids with me as soon as I start doing my immigration paper with Canadian immigration, but Cuba don't let you bring your family after four years. Actually, it was five years. They got a way to bring my family, Year 2000 was when I could—it was possible for me—actually was in Christmas time, December 24. I got to drive to Montreal to get my wife, my two—my boy and my girl, and take them home. It was four more, five years—24 then, but finally I brought them, I got my wife and my family. And in 2003, I got another boy, Brian. He's Canadian, the only Canadian in the family.

EY: Do you remember what it felt like that day, the reunion day?

MS: It was really, really cold, the first thing (laughs). It was really cold, but very warm, because I've been five years, almost five years without my family, and when you see your family coming—you've got everything ready at home, to receive my family.

[14:46]

But, I got for my son—he was, I think, twelve years already— I had for them a whole bag of small toys like he was five or six years old, because when I left Cuba he was almost eight— five, six years when I left Cuba. I started waiting, I started holding a whole (laughs)—keeping a small toy like he never grow in my mind. And when I saw them so big I said, 'Oh my goodness, how big! You're just a big boy now.' So everything change a lot. But very warm, so.

BM: Um, do you work with any other Cubans in the fishing industry?

MS: In where?

BM: In New Bedford, or—?

MS: No, no. Even here, I don't know if any Cuban people live around here, because I've been here for seven years, and I see poor African, Guatemala, Ecuadorian. Some people—many other different countries, even in Walmart, and I never found one Cuban people around here. Probably in Boston, but no here, no in New Bedford.

BM: Is it—because you speak English and Spanish, is it easy for you to relate to your co-workers?

MS: Yeah, but I try to be polite enough with all my co-worker. We have uh, Cuban, we have two, three—I think it's four—one girl is from Honduras, and two more guys—two more guys, they're from Guatemala. Diego and his son, from Guatemala. And when they came here—well, they

don't speak English actually— so when they came here, they're looking for me. 'Miguel we need you to help us, because we don't speak English,' and so I— between him and Tor, talking what they want, or what Tor have on hand for them. And from there, I've been working with them all the time. Even when we got work for them, I got to come to Tor, I say, 'Tor, what you got for those people? We know nothing.' And they say, 'Well, do this, do that.' So from there, I go there and find the thing they want, I give you the instructions on how to do the job, and how they want the job. And they understand, and go on their way. Sometimes I [say], 'You understand something, anything you need, you let me know.' So they come to me and [say], 'Miguel, how they want this?' Or his son, working now on the other side of the building. And sometimes he comes in and says, 'I got these papers, but I don't know what to do with this.' I said, 'Well, let's go. Come and see Tor and see what he want.' So Tor explains [to] me, and I explain to them how they want the job. So, I like to work with them, you know, I like to be polite with them. Even one new guy, he is—Walter, young guy. He said, 'You Miguel?' I said, 'Yeah, I'm Miguel.' He said, 'You know, this guy working here, he recommended me, he said, 'Say hi to Miguel when you get there.' He said, it's not because me. He said, 'Great guy.' I said, 'Thank you, man.' **[In Spanish]** thank you.

EY: When you said the other side of the building, what happens on the different sides of the building?

MS: Because on this side, we do rigging and netting. And that side here, they do all the scallops, marine, water, all the door. Some different people do different job. That's why I said the other side of the building, because we got two sides, one side for rigging— they're working three or four guys, and the other side working three or four more guys, who do different activities. So, that's why I call it that way.

BM: Do you agree with the statement, 'fishing is a family business'?

MS: It is, it is. I agree that the fishermen, even from us—because we start doing the job for them, they don't receive the good job from what we do. They cannot go fishing, right, because if you want a net, the net should be 10 meters on one side. If you put one side 10 meters and one side 11 [meters], the net will be outside that, or in the size. So it's no open the same way. So, everything got to be exactly what it is. You cannot change it. So from there, we are the family for them to start doing the best job. And so many fishermen come with us, we fish, we start— not because we are, it's because they appreciate what we've done for them.

BM: What types of nets do you make and what is the net making process like?

MS: Well, we build it here to many, many, many different kinds of net. Could be for a scallop— no, a scallop is different—for a ground fish, or for sometimes for a small fish. Shrimp could be, or for calamari also. That's a different kind of net, everyone is different.

[20:26]

So, the process is when they give you the blueprinter, you have to know how [to] read the blueprinter. And sometimes before you start, it's fair [to] ask Tor or the owner how they want it, because every fisherman is different, every net is different. If you want to build the net for

somebody ? —so maybe this guy with the gill net, they want the same net but different meshes and different sizes. So, even you got the same plan, everything not the same. Because they want something more light. If the same net, you see the paper is the net—but the mesh, or the net you use it, is different then the other net. So you need to ask how they want it and they explain to you how they want cutting the pattern, everything. And from there you start building your net.

BM: And what materials do you use?

MS: We use this here, Poly or the Dyneema. So, net using Dyneema, it is a light net, but very strong. Dyneema is something strong, even like, uh, irons. Really, really strong netting. And they use those ones—or they call it, those on the green netting, they call it like a plastic. Some people call plastic. That's different poly netting. Or nylon too, nylon netting.

BM: What are some of the challenges you faced with making nets and your net making journey?

MS: Well, in here, in this whole system, when I was fishing, I was like the main guy on the deck for netting. And building—I got to build the whole seine, how go fishing. The fishing boat can go fishing, you know, do a good job. Like I said before about family, when you do [a] good job, the net working fine. If not, everything will be a disaster. So, that was one of the things that we do in here for that kind of job. I don't know if [I] answered right the question.

BM: What makes you the happiest about being a net maker?

MS: I like it. I love it (laughs). I love working with netting. I love to see the product going out of the door. It's a good product, and people like it. And people say, 'Man, that's a good job.' 'Thank you.' That made you proud, right?

BM: What are the skills somebody needs to make a net?

MS: Well, you have to—the first thing you got to know is how to grab the needles. How you feel about your needle—what net or mesh [you need to use]. Because the mesh got two sizes. You got the Point 'A,' the Point 'B.' And then the mesh working—or the netting working in different ways. If you pull the net in this way upright, you see that the two knots on the side will be coming closer, so the net is working in that way. But, if you pull the net in the other way, by the other two side's knot, when you pull it, those two knots on the top, they never close. Because when you pull, those knots don't close, they stay like this. So, the net can work in that way. And that's one way—and the other side, the other thing you have to learn is how you cut it, how you read the plane—what that means when you see the blueprint, you call them plane. And you see the blue printer, what you cut in the blue printer. If you're not learning the stuff, you cannot make a net.

EY: I'm curious, because you were doing net making in Cuba, now you're doing net making in the US, did it translate what you had learned, one to one, or was it different?

MS: You have to learn it yourself, because every—example, when I work in Nova Scotia,

[25:00]

I worked with netting too, I work with Cuban people. All them working together were Cuban. And the way that we build the plane, or the blueprinter, is like a Russia— the Russian way.

So, we don't pull left, but the sign is different. The example we put in the size, is a one-two. That means 1.2 bar. One, up two. A two in the bottom, one in the top, so that means 1.2 bar, but here they use B and M. 2B—um, 1B, 2M. That mean, one bar, two mesh. Or two mesh, one bar. But it will let it, then there, we got it with number. And inside the blueprinter, we put one of the triangle, or rainbow, rainbow. And that mean mesh. And there, you put 60 sample. So you know that 60 means— that means a 60 millimeter mesh that you got there. In here, they don't add that. They put outside. They put one line and tell you 240 or 220, that would be the size of the mesh. And the twine, 4.4 or 2.4 twine, but it's on the sides. So it's different, the way that everybody built in the blueprinter. If you don't learn that one, you cannot do it neither. Another thing you gotta learn is how you join. Because no— none of the joints on the netting is the same. Sometimes you got more netting on top than in the bottom. So you have to learn how to reduce the pulling the top to the bottom, and that's math. You got math to do on that point. I can't show you the math, but— (laughs).

BM: So what is your best advice to give someone that is aspiring to become a net maker?

MS: Well, the best thing they got to do is try to find somebody—not like me, well, I won't put myself. Somebody like me, somebody that know netting, somebody that can help you to—to get in there. It's like, when the people coming from here, from Guatemala for example, they never speak English. Like, you not taking one book or one—on the phone or whatever, and try to start learning by yourself. Somehow, you speak it and go to school, or somebody help you. You never learn it. So, the netting is the same. You have to find somebody that can show you what that mean, because even if you had a book—you read a book, you say, 'Yeah I understand.' But what does it mean, the book? You don't know, because you can see on the ground how the netting work. So that's what you need to— to learn it. And it's good to teaching today, to young people about this activity, because we are losing a lot of young people in this. Even when we do mend the netting, the fisherman, or fishermen, don't want to do it. And they bring the netting here to fix it because it broke or whatever. And some fisherman, or some people on the boat, don't want to do that. And so if you learn it, or if you know how, you can work in that and open a new business for yourself to work in netting. That's simple, like that.

EY: Are you saying it used to be that people who were on the fishing boat would know how to mend, and that they are no longer learning that skill?

MS: Well, when we fishing—that time when we were fishing men, everybody or most of the people that you bring with you know about netting. Know how to get a needle, how to mend it, how to do it. You can say, 'You work on there, I work here, you like on working in that corner.' Everybody, diverse in the way they can do the job. Diverse ways. But today, sometime, you see one guy holding, only one guy sewing. Only one guy sewing. That's the only guy who know about that. Only half of these guys, after he's free to do that gotta put the net on the water to fishing and go— there's many things they gotta do, and it's only one guy, all the other guys don't do nothing. So they don't end it, they don't want to end it—they only go for work, and they don't get the money. That's it.

[30:00]

BM: So how do you see the future of net making in New Bedford, considering factors like globalization and technology advancements?

MS: My age is 62 years old. And probably, I got four more years—four or five more year, working on— if you go to 67, working this activity. We don't have any young people coming here to do that. All the people that working here in netting is more than 60 years old. So that mean that it's the young people we don't try to encourage— the young people, and bringing them and teaching them how [to] do the job? This one, very soon, will be down. Maybe five, six guys more later? But not too many people are going to work in this. Check in here—Roger, he's 70, 72, I think. Randy, 60— I think he's 70 too, 70 years old. Me, 62. These are three guys. We got the girls, Luz, she's not from Honduras? Well, she learn a little bit, for not that much. Not because they don't teach here, it's because the type of job is not really easy and you have to pay attention to the job all the time. Because, like I said, not everyone—it looks like the same, but it's not the same, everything is different in the end when you join, or when you put that in together. If you're not learning, the first thing you have to see are learning the blueprint. If you don't take the blueprint in your hand and can't read that, you just do what they said. Do what it said, that's it. That's the only thing you do. If something wrong come, you can't know what's wrong or right, because you don't know. For example, when you know about that, until you find out, you look and said, 'Well, you know what, I think it's four. Well, it's three or four.' It's different when you know about that stuff, right? That's what I mean about that.

EY: Is net making dangerous? Are injuries on the job common?

MS: No, just sometimes you get cut with the knife. Because when you cut netting and you put your finger in wrong place, you get cut. But if it's a simple cut, you go put a band-aid in there and you keep working. Or a piece of tape, electrical tape (laughs). That's how you do it, that's it.

BM: Do you have any memorable experiences or stories related to your work as a netmaker?

MS: Well, not like a netmaker, but like a—how do I say—in rigging sometime you try to put together, like, in rigging—when I'm fishing, I will join the two main wire. And the main wire, sometimes it's not really new. It's not really new, and I get one hole in here, in my hand, because when I pull the wire, the piece of wire go through my hand and go through here. So, that one— gotta go with the plier and cut it— somebody gotta go there, I got the wire there. And somebody go over with the plier and cut it and bring it to the—with the doctor, and they take it out, and put the needle for the infection, all this stuff. So, sometimes something like this happens when you work in netting, and it's— but what happened, you have to place attention to the job that you're doing. Because when you're pulling the wire and you go cross over the wire, what could happen? The wire could move and hit you and boom, hit you where you don't want to. So, when you working with wires, I say 'Be careful!' But some people don't care, even when you say, 'Be careful,' they keep doing what they're doing. And they don't even look at what they're doing. That's why sometimes you get accident. Not because it's dangerous, because you don't place attention on what you're doing, that's it.

BM: What is the largest net that you've ever worked on?

MS: Oh, none in here. In here, the net is not that long because the fishing boat around here is not that big.

[35:00]

You see big nets sometimes, it could be one of those nets that are 120 meters—120 or 300 or 200, or more. But to see big nets— I see big nets in Nova Scotia when I'm fishing, way down there, we had a big boat in Newfoundland. And this boat is shrimp and the net was really, really long. I can't remember the length, but it was a long net.

BM: Can you tell me what a trawler's net is, and what sea animals is it used for?

MS: Well, trawlers is the one—any net that goes down on the water, down on the ground, on the sea bottom, that's a trawler. Any net goes fishing, a small net, like a circle, circle net is a trawler. All these are called trawlers, because it's the net that you're building to do the fishing, okay? And then—some people call it a fishing net, or other people a throw net, a trawler could be the boat that goes with the net to fishing, that's a trawler. And some other is scallop, it's different. So, like you know—to know what is a trawler, you say, 'Well, this one is a trawler boat, because they go fishing with the net.' But if it goes with scallop, it's not a trawler, it's different for scallop. That's why the name change. Not for the nets but, you know, for what activity we're going to do.

EY: Do you have to be aware of different laws or regulations when you're making nets?

MS: Yes, yeah. Because—actually, we're calling the end of the net, 'the cutting'. Some cutting, [for] example, if you go to groundfish, you go to fishing shrimp, you go fishing calamari. Calamari, if you got the size mesh on the cutting, it's different in everyone. [For] example, for shrimp, you've known, the big size, you got 60. For one fish, you got six and a half. For calamari, you got a little, like a 60. Because it depends on what kind of fish you want to get. And then some netting—sorry— the cutting got to be, like they're calling a square. A square— making a square, like this. Because if you make the net like that, if the net close, then the fish can go out. More fish can go out. So if you make a square, you get—that one don't close no more. So the small fish in there can go out, so you can't leave the small fish to go. That's why they're calling a square, and some fishing workers cutting a square. Even in the front, you gotta know what size mesh you want to use for the kind of fish you want to get. Do you see that there?

EY: The photo?

MS: No, the plasticine.

EY: Mm-hmm.

MS: That one, they don't use much in here. Or that one, they call it gray. The gray is used to let go through the gray in the fish that you need. The small fish is the gray—come out of different fish, like lofters and like this. They got a hole in the top, they can go out. And the other fish inside. I don't know if they use it here, but in Nova Scotia, they use it a lot.

BM: Have you witnessed any changes to the industry over the last 20 years?

MS: I cannot answer properly that question, because I really don't work direct[ly] right there with the industry. Just because I am building fishing net and making rigging, stuff like that. I don't know what's going on with them on that side, I really don't— can't follow that one.

[40:00]

Could be changes. Everything changes around, even the price—the fishing price, or the way to cut the fish. Or you got to put a take on the cut and the size, everything. When several people go there to look they know what you got. It's right or no. Few people. I cannot answer.

EY: What about just in relation to this part of the industry, like the net making part of the industry? Have you noticed any changes over your time?

MS: Not really, the only changes around here is done, it's like I said, that you have to follow some instructions, because if you don't build the net in the way that— the people look at the fishing, and they are kind of—how you call it, we call it down there NAFO [Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization]. Up here, it's different people, probably. They turn it into a—fisherman, what they need to have on the net, for example, you got six points—six and a half mesh on the cutting, and you go 5.5, that's wrong. So it's out of the law. The law said, 'No, you need six points each, and you got five here.' So you gotta take that one out, and they put one ticket—or one fine, because you got steal fishing with that. Right? So when you building here, you have to know that too. Because who put the cut in there—who put the net in there was me. So it's my—I put the cutting, I put the net in, that don't go there, that's it wrong. So, when they get the fine, probably the fine goes to me too (laughs), because I built the net. So, I've got to know what is kind of the fee to go, and what is the regulation they have right now. That's the only way you can build them.

BM: So, you mentioned something about fines. What are the effects that regulations have on the industry?

MS: Well, not for us—I don't know really for us, for fishing net building. I don't know, because that one being more for Tor— that's the owner of the company, or the main guy in the company. And for him, they're coming all the people that they need to know. But that's why when we build the fishing net or we make the cable—the wire, the main wire, or whatever like that, they come to us and tell us how they want it. At my point all the time, when he gave me any traction on the wire, I said, 'What size wire do you want? What length? And what do you want to put in there?' So, all these come in one sheet and I see there, I've got to do the way that he wants. Not in the way that I think it's the right way, no. I've got to do the way that he thinks— the way that he gives me, the right way.

EY: I'm curious, this is jumping back a little bit, but you talked about how your brother was the first person to introduce you to fishing in Cuba.

MS: Yeah, he was.

EY: And you have kids of your own, and you talked a little bit about fishing being a family business. How does your family, younger than you, view the fishing industry or net making? Do they have any interest in it?

MS: No, already—my son, my other son, lives in Spain, and we don't need to wait for a long time. And he's in the cooking—how you calling it? Those people cooking main dish— oh, I forgot, I forgot the name of that guy. So my other son worked for a company in Alberta, for oilfield. And the little one, my younger one, the 20 year old, he went to university. He wanted to study for the doctor. So, I said, 'Okay.' And my daughter—there's only one—they got four girls, the only one she liked a little bit. She done some work. You know, of course, she's working, done some work in the fishing, right? But it's not because she needed that point, and I can teach her how to do it, she did it. And it was good of her, but the only one really in the—oh, my wife works here, helped me do some job, did a bit, but no. Not because she knows, it's because I taught her how to do it, but not because they like to, I guess (laughs). You know, that depends on—depends on what you really need, because if you don't work in here, you're not working nothing. Because if I teach you how to do something, even at home, I say, 'It's okay, I'm gonna help you to do it.' And they do it but

[45:00]

not because they know that activity. This is different here. This is a family business, because everyone working here is a family. Tor, the mom, the father. The other guy too, and rent—um, hand, every one of them is a family. So that's why this one is a family business, and I feel like I've been inside the family too because I help them to grow this place, right? That's something—I like it here, and the way that they treat people. They treat very nice people, they are very nice people. That's why I've been here for seven years—not because they're here because they're ready, and if you need something you come today and say, 'Hey, I got this situation and they look after you.' They do, yeah.

EY: Is there a moment that you're thinking of when they extended generosity or when a situation came up?

MS: Well, you know, all the time. Any time you can see the good heart of the people, when they would look after you. They ask you about how's your family, how you feel. I was—I'm diabetic. I was in the hospital for more than two or three times, last time about five days because I got pneumonia. A little bit pneumonia, I got there for five days, and they came [to] see me in the hospital. So nobody, you know—and when you work in business, they call you, say 'Hey, how you doing?' 'Good.' But they don't go there to see you, how you doing. And here, every time I got—I lose toes, so I'm diabetic, I lose toes, one time and both—the mother, the father, Tor, went there to see how I'm doing. So, you know, that was I feel like a family. Because anytime I got in a situation, they'd be there for me.

BM: Are there any traditions or celebrations that your job has here?

MS: Here?

BM: Yeah.

MS: Yeah, well, we got Christmas time. We got picture, and I even put pictures on YouTube, on Facebook. About Christmas—this Christmas, we got another one before, um, all the—like, with some holidays, we don't celebrate here. Some holiday, yes, all the main holidays, they give us the day off, or say, 'Well, the holiday is Monday. We start—we don't need to work Thursday. Okay, from Thursday to Monday, you guys got the same time off.' It's good too, you like the one—almost a week vacation.

EY: How has—if you're comfortable sharing, I'm curious how your pay has changed since the 50 cents a day, to now?

MS: Oh (laughs). But if you see me working here for all these years, it's because something good come in with the pay. It's no—I was in Nova Scotia to be a manager, a warehouse manager. Well, I gotta get there in the morning, count, seven o'clock, I got my own key for open the door, go up by myself, get there, open the door. I said, 'Come one line, the whole line', then when I finish count, go to the computer, put everything in the computer. Then, after eight, the rest are coming, get on low, and go all by myself. Yes, I get good pay, but I feel very, very hard working. Working, working, working hard. Out here, I work the same way, but I feel better.

BS: You mentioned that there, um, are a lot of Central Americans and maybe Puerto Ricans that have worked here, do they have fishing connections or fishing experience or are they often new to the industry?

MS: They don't know nothing about fishing. Nope, even the Guatemalan people, the Honduran people, they come here to work. They don't know nothing, really, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing about the fishing industry. They don't know. One of the things I do here was teaching them how [to] do the job. And go there, after then what how they want it, and how [to] do the job and do my job. I go around an hour after, one hour [after I finish my job and ask], 'How you doing guys? You do this, you do that,' 'Yeah, yes, we do.' Even the girls there, Luz, she came here, she don't know nothing about netting. Don't know even how to pick up the needle, nothing.

[50:00]

But, I was helping her and teaching her how to do it and she started doing it little by little, and get better now. She been here for more than one year, so she get better now. So, it's something that I feel proud myself and some people can learning and teaching people to do the job, even—we got a new guy in rigging, his name is West. He came from that business beside he don't know about rigging I start teaching him—young guy, he's 22 year old, I think? He's very young, I like it because young guy like this—we need it. So, he came here, 'You know?' 'No, I don't know,' I said 'Okay.' 'Look, I do the rigging like this, bah, bah, bah. I show, you do it.' 'No way, look like this.' So, he get it, I said, 'I don't care what way you do it, the only thing I want you doing the right way. When you do the right way, you do it right, you don't get hurt. You do it right, the way you decide to do it, that's fine.' You know, and he learning, learning, learning, he—right now, can only take him one job or two different jobs and I can close my eyes, he's going to do the job right. That's why I could teach those people—that's why I said before in the business industry we need young guys, young people to teach them how the job is done even in new guy's position on there in—how you call it—heritage. I was there one day, and I got a piece of net in there and hang it

with needle and knife. So I cut it, any cut and people come and say, 'How do you see that?' I said 'Look, come here.' And young girls would go, and with help, they do it! I said, 'Nice, you know how to do it now.' So it's good to have something like this, sometime go there and we've been peace of netting and young guy try to show them here and take it one blueprinter, and show them how that work take one piece of netting and try to cut the pattern you have in there, that's good for them to learn it too. I think probably you can bring people more to the fishing industry.

BM: When you learned something about the fishing industry in Cuba, one, was that education free? And two, would you ever like to be a teacher or give classes or an instructor in the fishing industry?

MS: Well, yeah, I like to. I was a teacher. I was a teacher in Cuba, because one time in the—I worked with one company called Flota Cubana de Pesca. F -C -P. Flota Cubana de Pesca was a big company with a lot of boats, because sometimes you don't have a place to go to fishing, and they ask you—'Well, I got my degree,' and they say, 'Well, can you teach, go be teacher?' I say, 'Yes, I do.' So they give me the book. I do my— I prepare my class, I go there. I got five or six different people, with different officer in there, and they like to let me do, and go join me in the classroom. I teach him and show them how to do the job, and they like it. More than six months doing that. So yeah, I like to. Even here, if—later on, if I could get into school where I can teach people how to do rigging, how to join a rope, how to do any time the eye splicing, how to do the netting, because I work on this stuff. How to cut the mesh, how to join the top of the bottom, I like that too. If I could do that, I'd really do it because I like it.

EY: Is there anyone that you particularly admire or respect or look up to in life, or in this industry?

MS: People that are—you mean, people that I like, or—?

BM: People that you look up to or respect?

MS: Wow, yes. In this one—in here, in this company, the main name I respect because he's Ray, he's my guy—is Reidar, the owner. The main owner of this is—I don't know, he look after everything and he always got—you talk with him and he got always one answer for you, that you can use it for yourself. And it's Reidar. Really nice guy, really. Reidar, yeah.

[55:00]

BM: What effect do you think arts, culture, and tourism are having on the fishing industry?

MS: Art? Well, build the net—sorry— to build the net is an art. That's one art that people sometimes don't believe that it is, but it is art. Because when you take a piece of paper, you can draw it, and draw in the piece of paper what you want. It's like when you take something and you draw up the design— the engineer, the builder making the big building, they take the blueprint and get there and design what they want. And the other people come and put it all together. So that's why I call— to design the net is an art too. Because when you build that, and you go outside, and you say, 'That's fine, yeah.' Yeah, because it's like this. You say, it is.

EY: Who designs the nets here? Who designs—?

MS: Here is Tor. Tor is the guy to design all the netting and pass it to you, then what they want to [do]. Tor Bendiksen. I think it's that Bendiksen (laughs).

BM: Are there opportunities for people to learn from Tor how to do that part of the net making process?

MS: Oh, not in the net making. Well, I learning— no, I know how to do the design, too. Yeah, I've done my design on paper, I've done it. I've got one with my name. But it's not what I'm doing. He passed me what he got and just checked what he got. But not right now, because right now, like I said, I'm working rigging. Nobody in rigging, and we need people working rigging. So I designed and was working netting, and he said, 'No, the guy who was rigging, he left. We got nobody in rigging.' I said, 'I can help you with the rigging.' He said, 'You do?' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, I could do rigging.' So I jumped into rigging and started working rigging and this netting. But something that they always— he passed me the blueprint, I just sit there. I looked at the blueprint. I said, 'What you want there?' 'No, I want like this one there. Here, no, no, no, here,' So when I get all the blueprinter rigged with him, I said, 'No, it can't work.' So then I'll go there and do the cutting. You have to—you have to be—you have the big bale. If you don't cut the big bale right, you're going to have a lot of mess. A piece of netting that you can not use it. So you have to look at the bale and say, 'If I cut it this way, I could use it. Cut it up this side, do this side,' you know. It's something that you have to—learn to save and use the whole bale in the right way. If not, you've got a lot of disaster, a lot of mess, a lot of netting that you can not use later. And then everyone— every piece of netting means money.

EY: What happened to your blueprint? What did you do with it?

MS: Well, I saved it. I don't use it. I just have it at home because—before I never used an AutoCAD. But I started learning AutoCAD, and I like to do those things on the computer. So I see in the computer, I start doing something and they come out nice. I like it, I show it. He says, 'It's nice.; But it's like a different kind of net, so I keep it. Don't use it.

EY: And what is AutoCAD?

MS: AutoCAD.

EY: Yeah. What is it?

MS: AutoCAD is the design that go on the computer, where you can build in different stuff. You can build netting, building, construction, many things. Depending on where you're going to use it.

[1:00:00]

BM: Do you enjoy eating seafood at home?

MS: I love it (laughs). I love seafood more than any other stuff. If I got fish, I can eat fish every day. Don't bother me. Really, no.

BM: What is a good recipe for us looking to enjoy some fish?

MS: I like haddock, pan-fried haddock. That one is—we take the haddock, okay, and put a little bit of lime on the top. A little bit of salt and pepper, and we leave it there for maybe an hour, covered. And then we take an egg, flour and cornbread. We dip it in the egg, then in the flour and then the cornbread. And in the fry pan, you put a little bit of oil on the bottom of the fry pan. When it's hot, you put the filets in there and then to the other side, do the same. Then get a little browning, por not too much oil. If you have to use more, then use olive oil. I put it there, and this is perfect. All these things I like— well, that's what I got for now. But two cans of the chowder—clam chowder, two cans, I leave it there. Now I take some potatoes, and cut the potatoes into little squares and boil. And put them on the side, take a shrimp, boil the shrimp, and put on the side. And then a fish, cut the fish in pieces, cook the fish, and put on the side. Then you take all this stuff with butter, you put butter on the bottom of the frying pan over where you want to put it. And you start dipping there all over the onion, garlic, all the stuff, cutting little pieces. And you do with the butter. You move it until it gets cooked. Then you add in the shrimp, then you add in the fish, then you add in the potato. And then you open your can, your two cans of clam chowder. I put it in there, I move it around, and leave it to cook. That's great. You got a scallop, you put a scallop too. It's good (laughs). That seafood is really, really good. Try at home one day, and you will see. It's extremely good. I like cooking, too.

EY: How did you learn to cook and cook seafood?

MS: Well, I learned to cook everything, because I was nine years old when my mom was working outside home. I had to look after my three brothers. My two brothers, my sister—I mean, two brothers. I was the older one. And sometimes we'd be at home and say, 'What are we going to cook? What are we going to eat?' I don't know. I call my mama and say, 'You know, we got nothing to eat.' She say, 'Yeah, we do! You take—' I gotta go down, go to the main floor. I go down to the main floor to use the phone, because we don't have a phone at home. Call mom. Say, 'Mommy, what we do for food?' She say, 'Well, we got rice, do this', and she told me to bring a piece of paper, tell me what I'm cooking. So I go home, I do it in my own way. Everybody eats, okay? But when my mama come from work, almost 11 o'clock at night, she look and say, 'What you cook?' I say, 'Look at the rice.' She look at the rice, say, 'Ah, that's good!' But later on, I see all the rice in the garbage (laughs). I say, 'Oh, no.' She said, 'Come here, I'll show how to do the rice in the right way. That was not bad, but it's better in this other way.' So she taught me again, and this time, I start doing the cooking. I learn.

BM: Do you still have family back home in Cuba?

MS: Yeah, my sister. I'm the only one from my family—out of Cuba, me. I decide—they in Cuba, they stay there, they don't have the opportunity to go out. What can I do? I try to help them somehow. My sister diabetic too. So, it's not much medicine for them out there, so I try to use my own medicine to send her some of my medicine that she can use it, and money to help somehow. You know, little by little. I try to help them somehow, but I don't have another way to do it. Even yesterday I tried to send my sister \$100, because she needs money. Right now, one dollar is four hundred pesos Cuban. One dollar. It's my money, and they need it.

[1:05]

They don't have it. You go to YouTube, Facebook, and look up Cuba. Look up Cuban stuff, go there, put it in 'See Havana', 'Go Havana,' whatever— 'Havana today,' and you open—and you can see so many YouTubers that start putting stuff from Cuba. You think, 'What?' They take you in the right place, to Cuba. Nowhere they don't want you to see, no. Just the right place that you need to see. That's the way, anymore.

BM: Do you like New Bedford, as your new home?

MS: I love. I live right there across the street, but very quiet. I don't like— never go to the bar, start around people. I like more stay home, if I like—I like beer sometimes, but one or two beers is good at home. So stay home, cooking for family. Everyone together, sitting there, chatting, talking, and have fun. I like dancing, I like dancing with family, but I don't go to the bar. I don't go to the bar to—no, why I go to spend money in the bar, have problems, whatever, for two or three beers that you can buy and drink at home? No. I don't—I don't lose my time. No.

BM: Is there anything that we missed that you would like to share or anything else?

MS: Well, I think that we have seen—talking, even seeing that no need to be here. We would stay here talking, and it was nice. Nice to see you guys asking about all the situations that would happen today—that I don't have it, before. I don't—there are these kinds of things, it's beautiful. It's really nice what you do, guys. Thank you.

BM: Thank you.

MS: Thank you. Thank you, you guys.

BM: Thank you for your time.

MS: No problem.