

Interview with Chad Cunningham

Narrator: Chad Cunningham

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber

Location: New Bedford, MA

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Project Name: The Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project

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

Principal Investigator: Laura Bendiksen, Laura Orleans

Abstract

On September 29, 2012, Madeleine Hall-Arber interviewed Chad Cunningham as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project. Chad discusses his move to New Bedford from Virginia. From the first time Chad saw the fishing boats of New Bedford, he knew he wanted to be on them. Through hard work, determination, and a few connections, Chad got his start in the fishing industry, initially as a cook, before becoming an engineer. He has been fishing ever since. He chronicles the different boats he's worked on, changes in the industry, the impact of regulations, and his family. Though he acknowledges the lifestyle has its challenges, he says it's in his nature to be on a boat and on the water, and he couldn't imagine working anywhere else.

Madeleine Hall-Arber: Could you just introduce yourself for the mic?

Chad Cunningham: My name is Chad Cunningham.

MHA: Okay, great. Thanks. So when and where were you born?

CC: I was born in Leesburg, Virginia in 1974.

MHA: Is that where you grew up?

CC: For 18 years, yes.

MHA: So, what brought you to New Bedford?

CC: Well, I met a girl in Virginia and her family was from New Bedford. I had lived there my whole life, I'd never—I was born and raised in the same house. She said she wanted to move back here and asked me if I wanted to come with her, I said why not? Change of scenery. And here I am. [Laughs]

MHA: So how did you get into the industry?

CC: I'd seen the boats and I instantly wanted involved and just so happened that my girlfriend at the time, her brother was a fisherman and her family owned a boat, not her parents, but in the family, owned a dragger out of New Bedford and I just started, I guess, maybe showed up to the point of annoying him. Then he gave me an opportunity on the boat and I ended up fishing 10 years on the same boat.

MHA: Really?

CC: Yeah, it was an awesome experience and that's why I'm still doin' it.

MHA: Good. Yeah so where were you fishing, mainly?

CC: The southeast part, Georges Banks...[phone rings]. I, as far as we used to do, on the Trident when I was fishin' with him, that was the first boat I was on. We would go to Virginia flukin' every year. I've been up and down the whole coast from Virginia to Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York.

MHA: What size vessel is that?

CC: She was 78'. Nice sized boat.

MHA: That's good. Yeah. So maybe you can just tell me a little bit about what it was like being on that boat. What, what was the daily routine that you had?

CC: When I was, when I first started fishin'?

MHA: Yeah.

CC: I was pretty much a grunt boy. [Laughs] 'Cause I didn't know anything about it [phone rings]. I don't know why my phone won't stop. I started off basically I was cook and doin' anything else he was askin' me to do until he realized that I was an auto mechanic in Virginia. I had put a lot of time into it. He asked me if I wanted to become engineer, which I did and he put me down in the engine room. I learned it and I've been engineer, first mate, ever since. So I guess he did help me along the path, he taught me the ropes that's for sure. Like Rodney Avila's really good guy to me.

MHA: So you were working for Rodney?

CC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MHA: Okay, I know Rodney.

CC: I worked for Rodney for 10 years. He's actually, he's my daughter's uncle so it's kind of family-oriented in a little bit of a way but it was business-oriented down here.

MHA: Yeah.

CC: It was then, you didn't mix the two here. It was a different thing once we were away from the dock. [03:00]

MHA: So obviously you're not with Rodney anymore, you're on the Apollo. How did, did you have other boats in between?

CC: I had two. I've only fished on a handful of boats. 'Cause I kind of call myself a lifer, I get involved, I don't like to hop around. I like, I don't, I mean I get comfortable with my surroundings. I kind of like to stick around, I don't wanna have to go learn something all over again. Once I know it at least I know it. I don't have to go try and learn a whole new boat all over again. They're all the same yet different. It's just easier to know where everything's at and just work it with what you got.

MHA: So how did you end up, where did you go, what was the, was the next second boat you were on?

CC: The second boat I was on, I actually left the *Trident* to run my own boat, or run a boat for Billy Turner, the *Apache*, which didn't really work out. I left there and I fished for on the *Sao Jacinto* for about 6 years.

MHA: Do you mind my asking why that didn't work out? Was there a boat thing, or a personality thing?

CC: It was a payroll thing...

MHA: [Laughs] Alright, just, just curious. I'm always curious to see what makes people jump from one...

CC: Yeah it was a payroll thing, no it it was...the settlement wasn't what I was expecting.

MHA: And how 'bout the, you were on a third boat?

CC: Yup, I was on the *Sao Jacinto* for about 6 years and I left there and came to the *Apollo*.

MHA: Okay. So what is, is the *Apollo* also a dragger?

CC: A dragger and scalloper.

MHA: Okay.

CC: We do both. The summer time we scallop, the winter time we use the nets. So...it's definitely, we're busy.

MHA: Yeah.

CC: Boat doesn't stop.

MHA: So since you are mate and an engineer, do you also have to be working on deck when...

CC: Oh yeah, I work the deck, every, every tow I'm on deck. That's, that's part of my title...I'm not, I'm not mate with Shawn, I'm just the engineer for Shawn. I'd been first mate on the other boats that I was working and ran them as well, so. But with Shawn, I just, I'd rather just be engineer and that's a better place for me. I don't like all that responsibility. I mean I got enough responsibility over my head just worrying keeping everything operating properly.

MHA: How, how do you find the equipment compared to when you first started?

CC: Well the boat I'm on now, the *Apollo* is, is very high tech. Everything with the engine, the engine's computer-run, all computer-monitored. It's computer controlled. And the Trident didn't have that. It was a lot smaller engine. Our hydraulics systems are totally different. A lot more involved. All, all in the general that boat's very, it's very high tech. There's a lot to learn, but I've picked it all up.

MHA: Did you have to go to special courses or anything? [06:00]

CC: No it's pretty much hands on. Like I said I was an auto mechanic for a long time and it's just, I can, I can pick up on things pretty quick.

MHA: It just seems like now with so much computer aided...

CC: Well there is only so much you can do, with—like if we have engine problems, there's only so far I can take it. 'Cause I need to be able to hook it into a laptop to check everything out and I don't have the program or anything or the sort to do that, so. If I can't fix it out there, then for some reason we have to get a tow home then that's what has to be done. Then it's up to CP Brodeur's to fix the problem. But we, I do everything I can to make sure we don't have to go that route.

MHA: Now how about safety stuff, did, do you, does your crew go through safety training and all that?

CC: Oh yeah we do the safe—we do the routine safety drills as far as anything from running into a situations with fire, incoming water, having to abandon the vessel, putting on our survival suits. We regulated; we have to do it once a month, so. We just did the SEAMass maritime program about a month ago.

MHA: Oh good.

CC: We were involved with that. Went down, we all jumped in the tank with our survival suits on, put fires out, that's the third time I've been over to SEAMass to do that. I've been there a few times. 'Cause I've run into situations where if I didn't have that knowledge it probably, I know it helped to have it.

MHA: Have you ever been on a boat that was dead in the water, where you had to put on your survival suit and that kind of thing?

CC: Oh yeah. We ran aground and that was, that was...I was actually runnin' the boat. It was a bad situation. It was a few years, it was about 5 years ago and just too many hours at the wheel, I feel asleep.

MHA: Oh dear.

CC: Goin' into Newport, Rhode Island and I ran right into Castle Hill.

MHA: Oh, oh gosh...

CC: It was all over the news, and everything, every tourist from here to Japan saw it. It was fun. Everything...in the long run, at first, bad as the situation was, everything turned out to be alright. I mean, didn't put any holes in the boat, or anything like that. Just a bad situation. I'm not the only guy to do it. [Laughs]

MHA: Yeah, no....

CC: Not by a long shot.

MHA: Really [laughs]. So the other crew members on the boat...are they all local people or do they come from different parts of the...

CC: When we're draggin' all the guys are local. When we go scallopin' there's one guy from Virginia and there's one guy from Maine. They come down, and they've been steady crew with Shawn for a few years now. So he just continues to use them. They are only around for the scallop season. They're good guys, I'll give him that.

MHA: So how many people are normally, well when you're ground fishing, how many people are...?

CC: Four guys, four men on...on the boat including the captain. [09:00]

MHA: Okay so then the other two guys are just an additional two that come on when you're doing scalloping?

CC: Yeah.

MHA: Do the other crew members stay on, the ground fish guys?

CC: Yeah, well one of them does not. He can't scallop so he's replaced but he's back again now. He was with us last season draggin', he's back again. It's just that he knows he can't handle the scallopin' 'cause as I said the workload's so extreme.

MHA: Oh really. Huh.

CC: No, it's, it's crazy. [Laughs]

MHA: Well, maybe you could just give me a little idea about a comparison of a day ground fishing versus a day scalloping.

CC: Well, the first thing is, the watches that you run scallopin'. You're on your feet, standing there, 12 hours on, 4 hours off, 12 hours on, 4 hours off until the trip is over. Then, with draggin' it, you, a lot of times you're getting 3, 4 hour tows with the nets in comparison to scallopin' where you're not going more than an hour and ten, an hour and 20 minutes. In that 3, 4 hour time span, you have enough time to get the fish picked up, put away, put on ice and go in and get 2 hours of sleep before the next haul back. You're not, it's not mandatory that you stay on deck for 12 hours. You're gettin' a break in between. Scallopin', you're going, it's, it's a grind until it's over. And...

MHA: So you have to, the scallops come on board, what do you do with 'em?

CC: We, we, each scallop gets picked up into a basket and put into a tank and we process each one. Cut 'em out of the shells, bag 'em up into 50 pound bags, ice 'em down. To cut, I mean, our biggest trip this summer was 41,000 pounds for 11 days. I mean you figure a scallop weighs about 3 ounces, to do the math on 41,000 pounds, how many scallops we actually cut.

MHA: That's a lot.

CC: Oh yeah. You feel every bit of it too.

MHA: [Laughs] How 'bout your hands when you're...how long do they take?

CC: Oh, I'm still stiff. I just, I've been home 4 days and my knuckles, you can still see how swollen they still are. Two days ago you couldn't even see the veins in my hands. I've got pretty substantial veins and you couldn't see one of 'em.

MHA: Wow. Did you ever get cut, when, shucking?

CC: Nah, the knives are dull. The scallop knife is like a butter knife with a handle on it. They don't have a sharp edge.

MHA: That's good.

CC: Yeah. Codfish and haddock, that's a different story. Like when we're draggin' we gotta cut and gut each fish and we're using a ripper and you gotta be careful you can cut yourself easy. I've got my fingertips a few times. [Laughs]

MHA: Wow. Do you think that regulations....how do regulations affect you and the fishing?

CC: They're affecting every fisherman horribly. They're puttin' guys out of their houses. They're losin' their homes, they're losin' their families. They're losin' their livelihood. It's all because the government wants to manage the industry that they think people are making too much money and they want a part of. I don't agree with, I mean there's certain aspects to regulations where conservation is, needs to be looked at. [12:00] So 20 years from now fishermen still have a job. But, in certain instances to open up a closed area which is a breeding ground and has been for 10 years and all of a sudden let people go in there and fish. And then the next year say, oh there's no yellow tails. Well why'd you open a closed area where everybody that's what they're goin' for. With, where's the sense in that?

MHA: Do you ever participate in regs, in regulations like go to the counsel meetings?

CC: I've been to a few of the meetings and it just seems to be a bunch of hot air. You hear everything and everybody arguing, attesting what the government's doing, National Marine Fisheries and...we can say all we want but all's it is like I said is hot air 'cause nobody's listening. They're gonna make their own judgement calls. They don't realize that I mean like I said, I started fishing in '95. And from then until now, the changes in this industry...in '97 I was, as green, still as green as could be, but I was making \$70,000 a year. And now, to do that, I mean, the boat that I left to come work on this boat, I couldn't make \$30,000 a year to save my life on.

MHA: Really? Wow.

CC: It's just due to regulations.

MHA: Yeah.

CC: The regulations have hurt everyone of us so bad. They need to think about what they're doing. They want to, you know, make a government bid where the government is contracting these boats or whatever they're planning on doing. It's, I don't, they need to get better data and I don't know where they're coming up with all their data saying that sanddabs are going extinct and every tow we bring up more sanddabs and kick 'em over. I don't see where they're getting all their data 'cause I see the fish on a daily basis. You make one trip and you don't see those fish because maybe they're not there, they've moved over two miles. Just 'cause we didn't catch 'em doesn't mean they're not there.

MHA: Same thing with yellow tails, right?

CC: Haddock. All of it. They, everything moves, it migrates. It's not gonna stay in the same spot. Because I mean, if you saw the video of the bag of yellow tails, they're gonna be on the TV show that we're trying to get aboard. And that should be, that's a 3 hour tow. That bag is so full of yellow tails, you're gonna tell me that there's no yellow tails out there? You're crazy. They're there.

MHA: So how, how did the boat get involved with the TV program?

CC: I guess they had, it was all started with Carlos. I guess the History Channel did some research to find out who owned boats around here and they contacted Carlos and next thing I know Shawn's gettin' the word that they want to use his boat and I'm getting' called asking if I want to have a job on his boat and...said sure. Then I become a TV star I guess. [Laughs]

MHA: So they've already done the filming? [15:00]

CC: Oh it's done, the show airs Thursday night.

MHA: Oh I didn't realize it was so soon.

CC: Yeah, the show airs Thursday night at 9:00.

MHA: Have you seen...?

CC: Hmm-hmm.

MHA: And what do you think?

CC: They did good. The production crew did a good job.

MHA: Oh good.

CC: It looks pretty interesting from a, the public, if they like *The Deadliest Catch*, they're gonna like this.

MHA: Oh good.

CC: So.

MHA: Was it ground fishing or scalloping?

CC: Ground fishing.

MHA: Okay. Interesting. So, when you, you're out for, what is, what is your trip like? How many days?

CC: Like the duration? It's like 8 to 10 days on average. The longest I've seen is 13, and that's just 'cause we didn't have enough meat to come home yet.

MHA: Is that for both ground fishing and scalloping is it?

CC: Yeah it's about the same, about the same. Like our last, our last scallop trip here was 8 days. The one before that I think was 8 as well. It's just, whatever it takes to put the weight on so we can get home.

MHA: Right. Do you work out at Georges most of the time?

CC: Always. It's either north or south east, it's either the northern edge...we, we, we do go up to the Hague line from time to time, but most of the time it's Georges bank or southeast parts and we pretty much use the same grounds over and over again. We know where they're at. If they're not in one spot we try another. Makin' the same tows for years. [Laughs]

MHA: Have you see any change over time in terms of the habitat you know, what you're finding, where. I mean other than the obvious of the fish moving.

CC: Yeah, well, I see it just in the coastal waters. Like, I live in Rhode Island and I live right off the Sakonnet River and you see blue crabs up here now. Ten years ago you never saw blue crabs here. It has something to do with water temperature. Everything's changing, as I, you see one year you'll have the cod fish will be all up on the beach. It all depends on the water temperature. Things move with it. We just have to move with it too. [Laughs] But I've definitely seen some changes with fish that we've caught that we shouldn't catch. You know, what, what's this doing up here and I think he's lost you know.

MHA: Took a wrong turn somewhere...

CC: Yeah, I mean I've caught sea bass out in 60 fathoms of water and you never see that and it was just a freak thing, catch one or two in the net and what are you doing in there? This is out of the ordinary. You know, not generally you don't see that. But that's one of the reason I like fishing 'cause every day is different. You don't see the same thing every day. The job is the same, but the scenery changes a little bit.

MHA: Speaking of that, have you ever had unusual things other than fish that belong farther south, unusual things come up in the net?

CC: As far as animals or anything?

MHA: Anything. [Laughs]

CC: Let's see. We caught, I caught a rocket. I caught a satellite. [18:00] I caught an airplane turbine. Human body remains, a few times.

MHA: Really, oh.

CC: You just throw 'em back over, that's somebody's grave, you don't, I shouldn't even talk about it. But we've caught some weird stuff. I've caught a moose antler. I've got a lot of old bottles at home, from dating back to 1890. I've got so much stuff, I'd have to sit here and really think about it because, my girlfriend makes me bring everything home. She makes

stuff out of sea, out of sea life I bring home for her. Sea urchins and starfish and shells and she's got her own business making, she's doing good with it too.

MHA: Great.

CC: Hoping she can retire off it some day. [Laughs]

MHA: So you mentioned that you have a daughter.

CC: Yes, I do.

MHA: Would you like her to go into, doing anything with the fishing business?

CC: She wants to be—Well, she either wants to work with horses she tells me or she wants to be a marine biologist. She's, she's been out fishing with me. I've taken her to Hudson Canyon, I took her out for 4 days. She was only 8 and she, she was in every pile, every tow. She was in every tow. Sea sick the whole time. Throwin' up, still in the pile. She's like me, she had a blast. She loves it, she's been going fishing rod and reel with me since she could walk. She's, it's just in her blood I guess but hopefully she doesn't want to fish. Marine biology, go for it, go work at Sea World. [Laughs] But I don't want her fishin'. By the time she's of age to do anything like that, there probably won't even be an industry at this rate if they don't do something about it. Other than tryin' to shut us down every day.

MHA: Is that the main reason you wouldn't want to see her in it is because of the uncertainty?

CC: Well, as far as work security, absolutely. As far as safety-wise, you can get in a car accident and die driving to work. I mean, yes accidents happen out there. I just, two trips ago I got hurt. I gotta go possible, I go Thursday to find out if I gotta have surgery. Things happen. I was an auto mechanic you know, I was workin' on land actually when I first moved to New Bedford I was working at Ketcham Traps, I cut the tips of my fingers off. I've never done anything, I never lost a digit out there. [Laughs] but it happened here. Everyone is so nervous because you're on a boat. As long as the boat's maintained and you know you're keepin' an eye on things, the chances of you runnin' into a situation where you're not goin' to get home is very slim you know. [21:00] We watch the weather, we watch what's going on, things are that bad we know to go. Or stop, stop all production, lay to, we can't do anything about it, let this go by. But...

MHA: What's the worst weather you've faced out there?

CC: I got stuck in 70 knots of wind, 35 foot seas, this was back...I want to stay about 8, 9 years ago. I didn't think I was going to make it home. I never seen walls of water like that in my life. And I don't want to see it again.

MHA: [Laughs]

CC: No, that wasn't too fun. I got thrown right outta the wheel house chair, rolled down into the galley, everything in the wheel house on top of me. [Laughs] It was a mess. We snapped an outrigger, the stay wire, the outrigger fell. Seas, it was too rough. We were laying to and

it just snapped. But it happens, you kind of, if you were to sit there and think about that all the time you've never leave the dock. You just kind of gotta put it in the back of your head and if the situation arises just kind of try to be prepared for it.

MHA: So, under that, in that particular case did the weather come up unexpectedly or it just didn't...

CC: Well, we were already into the 4th or the 5th day of the trip and it was, I want to say January and you never get a full week of fishin' in without a gale in January.

MHA: Right.

CC: And we were stuck in it, it was more than a gale. At least we were able to retrieve, get the outrigger back up out of the water. We were able to fix it, a temporary fix anyway, just to get us, just to finish the trip and get home. But it was a hairy situation. I was climbing upside down, down the outrigger to get a rope on it into the water so I could lift it back up.

MHA: Ay yi yi!

CC: Oh, yeah.

MHA: So, what makes you stick with fishing despite all the...?

CC: I just love it and I—the job, I'm not—hard work is the only way I know how. And being on a boat, being on the water, it's just that I guess it's in my nature, I just. I love it. I do not, I couldn't handle working a desk job. I'd either be asleep on it or getting in trouble for not doing my job. Or something, it's just not for me. I'm not, I'm blue collar all the way. [Laughs] But I love it. The only way I'll get out of it is if I have no other choice but to find something else. Right now, I'm just gonna ride it out.

MHA: Yeah. Hopefully it won't, you'll be able to stick it out. So what do you think makes a good fisherman? If you had to look at all the people that you've worked with?

CC: Drive. Drive. You gotta have the drive to do it. [24:00] You gotta have the will to want, because there's situations you're stuck in out there—I mean, I've taken, I've had 3 guys in 15 years that are all, I want to go fishin', I want to try, I want to try it, I know I can do it, I know I can do it. Not one of them's made it. It's just 'cause they don't know what they're gettin' themselves into. You get out there, you see 20,000 pounds of fish hit the deck, okay now what? Pick 'em up. Huh? They look at you like, what? [Laughs] Then a couple days go by and they can't even move, they're just dead. Believe me, every ache and pain you can imagine but I just don't stop. I mean you just gotta kind of block it. It's not for everybody, that's for sure. It's like 10 percent of the people that actually try it, make it. I've seen, I guess that I've seen 3 guys, I've taken 3 guys that were great workers on land. I've worked with them on land doing, you know, odds and ends. Take 'em out there and they weren't worth a half share. They got paid quarter share because they couldn't do it.

MHA: Wow.

CC: So, that's the way it works.

MHA: Yeah. So how did most of your crew come word of mouth?

CC: As far as onto the boat, yeah. One of the crew members is family to Shawn. So, he's been around fishing, Shawn's known that he's been a fisherman his whole life. He knows he can work it, so. He got his job through that. Francisco that fishes with us. He's very well known, he's been on a bunch of boats. His father's, he's like a 5th generation fisherman out of here. He's Portuguese. He's a good guy, he knows his twine, he's smart, he knows the wheel house. We're a good team, we get things done.

MHA: Have you ever wanted to have your own boat? Buy your own boat?

CC: At one point, I might, I could say I wouldn't have minded owning one. But now, it's just too much to keep up with. I wouldn't even think about it. Carlos, he's got a lot on his plate. And I, I wouldn't know the first thing to do. I'm sure if I was wanting to pursue it, I would have to do all my research to figure it all out but, it's just too much of a headache for me. I'd rather just work and be a deck man and keep me working.

MHA: Well the, you know, the engineer work is challenging it sounds like.

CC: Oh yeah, there's a lot of times I'm really scratching my head trying to make something work. But that's probably why I like it, it's a, it's a challenge.

MHA: Now, are there many other, now there used to be when I, when I first started talking to people in the business, it seemed like most deck hands felt like they would eventually own their own boat. Do you think that's still the case? Or do you think most people realize that they probably won't? [27:00]

CC: Well...yeah, I think nowadays, they've watching all these guys going out of business, they know they're not going to be jumping on their own boat and startin' up their own thing 'cause nobody knows in 5 years if there's even going to be an industry here to even go to. That's the only thing that would stop me. I mean, I remember when I, back when I first started I was trying to convince my father to buy a boat. Just 'cause I seen the money that was involved, I was like, "Dad, you could buy the boat, in two years you have it paid off. Won't even have a mortgage and you've be sittin' here with money in the back and then the regulations started comin' in big time." I remember when the first cut of the yellow tail flounders, the first time they closed it. What an impact it had on us because that was what the Trident primarily fished for was the yellow tail. They were big on the yellow tails, Rodney and his father both. When they hit us with the regulations, they, we had to build a new net, that we, Rodney wasn't familiar with the different grounds because his family had been fishing in the same grounds for 20 years. Now it's change everything around and work the bugs out. I mean, just watching how disgusted Rodney got being half owner of the boat and just seeing what it was doing to him kind of turned me away. I was like, uh, I see how fun it is for you. [Laughs] I don't want nothin' to do with it. So... but now, at this point I would never even think about it.

MHA: So what advice would you give people who are just starting out?

CC: Don't count your blessings. You know, go out, make your trips, do the best you can and just kind of hang on because no one knows what's gonna happen. It could be, they could either make it or they're gonna break it. That's how you gotta look at it. You don't know what, what's gonna happen with the regulation changes. Who knows how badly people are gonna get impacted.

MHA: So you think you'll stay in New Bedford though?

CC: I'll fish—I'm not, I don't, I'll fish out of New Bedford it's just, I've already tried to fish in other ports. I fished out of Newport for a little bit, just for a friend of mine. I've made a few trips with him but the industry over there is already dead. Newport has lost, it's all inshore, little lobster boats now. All the draggers that used to go like Parascondola and all that in Newport are gone. I remember going to Parascondola and waiting all day long to unload, waiting on 20 boats. And now they're lucky if they get 3 a month. Right, it's just dead over there. The industry's already wiped them right out.

MHA: Well, what about Point Judith?

CC: Point Judith's losing it too.

MHA: Really?

CC: I was just there about a month ago, 'cause I got a few friends over there and I'm just lookin' at all these boats and they all look like hell and you can tell they've lost their drive. The boats are sellin' left and right. And Carlos is buying 'em up left and right. [30:00]

MHA: What do you think, what do you think is the secret to Carlos' success?

CC: He just sits on so many permits that he, the money he's already invested and received back he can just keep turning it around. And hey, more power to him. Keep these guys working, you know. I know he's dealing with his own static from the city of New Bedford and all that it seems like, whoever's makin' money, somebody's out to get 'em and stop 'em. But I don't understand why.

MHA: Yeah. I know especially if you look at some of the other leaders of industry they don't seem to have the same like, well, I'm not going to go into politics [laughs].

[END AUDIO 011]

CC: He has a lot of power...Carlos does. But, at the same time, it's not going to be his call when it comes down to it at the very end. So he's going have to go by what they tell him. Who knows what that's gonna be.

MHA: Now do you think that New Bedford is still a strong fishing community?

CC: Absolutely. I mean, the fleet is humongous still. I mean, there's still plenty of boats here. The network is very tight. Everyone, you know, it's like a brotherhood.

Everybody helps everybody. If anybody's in a jam, whether they know 'em or not, offshore, it's a totally different world. There is a brotherhood. They're gonna, everyone's gonna, anybody that's around somebody in trouble is gonna go to help.

MHA: How about on shore? Do you socialize with the other fishermen and that kind of thing?

CC: Oh yeah, I still, I socialize with guys every morning before I have to go work on my own boat. [Laughs] And the little congregation of friends, you know, people you met in the past and it was like yesterday I seen a guy I haven't seen in 10 years you know. He was really injured a few, a few months back. He almost died. He had the net drum chain break and smash his face, broke both of his eye sockets, his nose, his jaw in both places, knocked all his teeth out. Now he's, he brought his pictures of the incident. Just made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I was like, oh my God, Melvin, at least you're standing here talking to me you know. It's just, it's horrible. You don't wish anybody to get hurt. But it happens. I'm living proof. [Laughs]

MHA: Then, how about the families...do...it used to be that the Portuguese were really close and they'd had...

CC: Oh yeah, it's a different culture.

MHA: Now it's more mixed, right?

CC: Yeah, well now you're getting a lot of, you get a lot of guys from down south. A lot of Hispanic guys are comin' up lookin' for work. You still have the Portuguese guys, they, they are their own little network. They, they all meet up down here and talk all day long. I fished for the Portuguese, the Sao Jacinto I was on is full blooded Portuguese. The whole crew, I was the only American on that boat. Couldn't understand anything being said. Just did my job but they, the families I know, at Christmastime, the Portuguese they, a lot of the fishermen get everybody together. They have a big party. But they stay tight. But I don't, I don't, I wouldn't say they keep to themselves or anything like that. I mean, I go down there and I'll talk to whoever, any walk of life that I know. I'm not afraid of talking, see how somebody's doin'. You know, I got a lot of respect for a lot of the guys down here. I know a few of 'em.

MHA: Well it sounds great. So is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think you'd like people to know about fishing, or...

CC: No. just realize that we're puttin' food on your plate. Fight for us to keep a living going for us. [03:00] Nobody else seems to be able to do anything. National Marine Fisheries is just trying to wipe us out and I just hope it doesn't happen.

MHA: Yeah me too. Well I really appreciate you coming on and talking to us...

CC: No problem.

MHA: ...about...I'll have to watch on Thursday.

CC: Yeah, seems like everybody's going to so. I'll be at the premier party.

MHA: Are they going to do that down here?

CC: It's at the Madeira Café up on Church and Earl Street in New Bedford. I guess there's going to be a pretty big turnout.

MHA: I imagine, yeah.

CC: I better get their first. So I have a place to sit down. [Laughs]

MHA: Good. All right.

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

Reviewed by Nicole Zador, 12/09/2024